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**Caught between the clocks
everyday family politics between work, education, and care in Cologne, Germany**

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Caught between the Clocks

Everyday Family Politics between Work, Education, and Care in Cologne,
Germany

By Nina Sueße

Submitted to King's College London for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in International Political Economy

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Abstract

Reconcilability between family and work is an issue thematised in various literatures. What is often missing from accounts of Feminist Political Economy and Economics, as well as Welfare State Research, is an engagement with the everyday and how *time* is experienced as a multifaceted issue for carers. Focussing in on time, this dissertation addresses parenthood in sequences, from the wish for children, through the first year after birth, and in the transition from familial to public childcare. Tracing the *asynchronous* temporal structures of labour markets and public childcare in everyday life in Cologne, Germany, it reveals how *temporal disempowerment* is affecting carers. In terms of a conflict between neo-familialist and third-way ideologies, findings suggest that the current state of affairs has not stabilised towards any hegemony. The results are broken institutional interfaces in the shape of scheduling and synchronisation problems, as well as psychological issues arising from a mismatch between experiences and expectations around work and family reconcilability.

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Transcription Symbols

All transcription was done as verbatim as possible, simplified but inspired by Conversation Analysis symbols, as described below.

Symbol	Meaning
.	Pause
e:e	stretched vowel
Examp-	cut-off word
<u>example</u>	very strong intonation
[beginning of simultaneous speaking (overlap)
[example]	author's edits to text, replaces original
[...]	cut-out passage
(example)	German original term
example	Highlight
"hehe"	Laughter
"hmhm"	approving/encouraging sound
"mhm"	neutral/ disapproving sound

Translation

If not otherwise indicated, all transcript passages and other translations are author's translation, from German to English.

Abbreviations

AWO	Worker's Welfare Association
BDA	Confederation of German Employers
CA	Conversation Analysis
Caritas	German Catholic Welfare Association
CDU	Christian Democratic Union
CSU	Christian Social Union
DGB	German Trade Union Federation
Diakonie	Protestant Welfare Association Germany
DIHK	Association of the German Chambers of Industry and Commerce
DKR	German Red Cross
DPW	German 'Equal' Welfare Association
ECEC	early childhood education and care
FDP	Free Democratic Party
FES	Friedrich Ebert Foundation
FPE	Feminist Political Economy
GSOEP	German Socio Economic Panel
IE	Institutional Ethnography
KiBiz	Kinderbildungsgesetz (federal public childcare policy NRW)
KiföG	Kinderförderungsgesetz (right to childcare policy)
Kita	Kindertagesstätte (public childcare facility / kindergarten)
KTP	Kindertagespflege (home-based public day-care)
NRW	North Rhine-Westphalia
SGB	Code of Social Law
SPD	Social Democratic Party
TAG	Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz (day-care expansion policy)
U3	'under three', public childcare for children ages 0-3
Ü3	'over three', public childcare for children ages 3-6
VoC	Varieties of Capitalism
WSI	Hans-Böckler Foundation
WST	Welfare State Theory
ZDH	German Confederation of Skilled Crafts
ZWST	Welfare Office for Jews in Germany

0 Introduction

Whenever I encounter a parent, from Germany, Britain, the US, Brazil or China – it does not seem to matter where from – and I mention that I study problems reconciling family with work life, these parents will tell me they too experience those problems. The issue has been widely discussed in global and local discourses, engaging policy makers, managers, newspapers and social media, and not in the least family members amongst themselves. The scope of the phenomenon alone may indicate why studying reconcilability is important. The resource whose scarcity seems to lie at the heart of German problematisations of reconcilability is *time*.

This research project departs from the everyday experience of childcare practitioners and parents, ten years after substantial reforms have reorganised the German landscape of early childhood education and care (ECEC). These reforms have been promoted with the idea of improving reconcilability (Vereinbarkeit), and have generally been understood to facilitate a policy transition away from the male-breadwinner-model. With the clear political intention of increasing female labour market participation *and* fertility, the German governments of the last decade have seen an expansion of public childcare as a necessary complement to the recommodification of women, in particular the “silent reserve” (stille Reserve) of mothers with young children (BMFSFJ, 2006a, p. XXV). A process alongside reforms expanding public ECEC infrastructure has been a gradual and controversial cultural shift, lowering the legitimate age at which children should be given away from the mother into institutional care from three to one. A parallel shortening of paid parental leave in combination with a – in tendency higher – income-related parental benefit has been implemented to create a safe space for families during a child’s first year of age and redistribute care work between the sexes (BMFSFJ, 2011a). From the second year of parenthood, however, the reforms incentivise a faster and more intense return of mothers to the labour market (Geis, 2017; Unterhofer, Welteke and Wrohlich, 2017).

Situated at this junction of policy reforms in the last decade and the discourses that reflect these reforms, I am posing two research questions in this dissertation:

1. How do German parents and childcare practitioners experience family-work reconcilability as 'time problems'?
2. How have the reforms of family policy 2004-2015 shaped these problems?

Analysing recurring patterns in the constructions and problematisations of everyday family lives and ECEC provision, I arrive at the central empirical argument of this dissertation, which states that changes to the temporal structures described above – the focus of parental care to the first year of life only, and the complementary expansion of institutional care for children age one to three – have been occurring asynchronously. This asynchronicity – or temporal mismatch – comes about by a communication of reform targets that precedes the government's ability to bring the infrastructure into place, and thereby creates expectations that are frustrated in everyday lives. More broadly, the temporal norms of the standard working week and male-breadwinner-model have eroded in the working world – but not to the same degree in the family world: Public childcare facilities have standard opening hours from 7:30-16:30; free-time activities for children and adults are organised in the afternoon and on weekends. The schedules of the 'public' and 'private' sphere often do not align. This makes traversing between spheres (i.e. reconciliation) difficult.

Productivity pressures in the wage relation (as described by Marx, 1993), mediated by workplace culture, translate into temporal strains on family life. This has been theorised as the ongoing disintegration of the once-hegemonic gendered division of labour discernible in mid-20th century Western industrial societies, that is, the relative complementarity between the dominant temporality of the public and the respectively subjected temporalities of the private sphere (Glucksmann, 1998; Pateman, 1989). The flexibilisation and individualisation of employment has partially undermined the *collective* temporal structures of society, whereas the weakening of a gendered division of labour has challenged the ability and willingness of (female) carers to adjust to employment schedules (Daly, 2011a; Ostner, 2004). We should therefore speak not only of a decline of the male-breadwinner-model, but simultaneously of a relative persistence of the female-

carer-model. The distinction emphasises that processes that destabilise the breadwinner do not automatically translate into adjustments of the carer, nor vice versa, and that reconciliation needs to be studied as a set of imperfect and conflicted adjustments within transitioning economies of time (Harvey, 1999). Normatively, this transition is shaped by diverging ideas what constitutes 'good' time-use. This compels the political question how individualised or collectivised social rhythms should be – in other words, how much autonomy an individual should, can, or needs to have in various moments of life for a society to 'function well' as a collective.

Positioning my contribution in the academic debates presented in chapter 1, I will address how reconcilability issues have been framed in the Feminist Political Economist literature on social reproduction (1.1), taking the argument of a contradiction between capitalist accumulation and social reproduction, a 'crisis of care' (Fraser, 2016), on into the Feminist Economist literature on the accounting for and (under-)valuation of care work (1.2). Given the overall economic stability and high living standards in Germany, notably for my target group of professionals, the verdict of long-term crisis and unsustainability promoted in these literatures cannot be applied in a straightforward sense of 'economic crisis' (poverty, unemployment, etc.). Professionals make a particularly relevant group to focus on; first, because they are the key target group of recent reforms towards an adult-worker-model; and secondly, because as a group living under economically rather secure circumstances, they more than other workers have the power to follow and politicise their preferences for certain styles of family and work life. The argument I seek to make about how a 'crisis of care' affects professionals is somewhat more subtle than for less economically privileged workers, positing a different loss for professionals. This loss takes the form of alienation, which is effected through *temporal disempowerment* (2.3.3). This inquiry necessitates a more detailed examination of local institutions on different scales, including the last decades' social policy transitions as presented in the Welfare State literature (1.3). The German literature has extensively evaluated recent reforms, also from feminist and temporal perspectives (e.g. Auth, Buchholz and Janczyk, 2010; Bertram, 2009; Lange

and Heitkötter, 2007), but even the rather recent literature is dated due to the ongoing reform process. Furthermore the centrality of time in the public discourse has not been transported into the international (English) academic reflection. These 'gaps' justify further academic engagement. But beyond updating and translation, this dissertation makes a more profound theoretical contribution by interdisciplinarily linking perspectives from the sociology of time with Feminist Political Economy and Welfare State research. The result is relevant in particular for the branch of Welfare State and policy research that has emphasised 'ideas' and 'discourse' (Hall, 1993; Blyth, 2002; Schmidt, 2010), because I present an account of change that zooms in on the complexities of transition in everyday life, and thus goes beyond established accounts of ideas in formal policy making and elite interaction (Fleckenstein, 2011; Seeleib-Kaiser and Toivonen, 2011). Especially given the construction of recent German policy undergoing a "paradigm shift", and the proclamation of the "End of the Conservative German Welfare State Model" (Kuhn, 2012; Seeleib-Kaiser, 2016), a glance at everyday life provides a much more nuanced account of the timing of change. This pertains practically to the complexities of policy enactment and real economic challenges that the government has not sufficiently predicted; but theoretically this dissertation also challenges the 'neat' model of paradigms through the empirical finding that social time exists in distinct institutional schedules, interconnecting on different scales (Lemke, 2000). For example, daily structures at the kindergarten are anchored in weekly schedules, weeks in years, years in practitioners' working lives, and lives in organisations that 'outlive' the individual workers who enacted them. Reforms intended to restructure the everyday in the long-term need not only be triggered in parliament, but also to be enacted in all of those interwoven scales of institutions.

'Discovering' the above argument of temporal disempowerment and asynchronicity in participant accounts inspired me to assemble a theoretical framework (chapter 2) based on the two concepts of *experience* and *expectations*. These concepts emphasise agents' sense- and meaning-making of the past (experience) and anticipations of the future (expectations) as the micro-dynamic of reproducing social structures *and* social change. While the understanding of experience

mobilised here derives from Dorothy Smith's standpoint epistemology, Butler's understanding of sedimentation, and Sum & Jessop's account of semiosis (Smith, 2005, 1996; Butler, 1988; McNay, 1999; Sum and Jessop, 2013), I follow McNay in connecting these conceptualisations with Bourdieu's work on anticipation (Bourdieu, 2000; McNay, 2003) into an overall discursive-constructivist, dialogical framework (Bakhtin, 1981; Voloshinov, 1973). Embedded in this framework is a dimension interrogating social relations in terms of ruling, based around Foucault's account of *gouverner* and a Gramscian understanding of *hegemony* (2.3).

Orienting this conceptual basis towards a temporal perspective required further engagement with time concepts. Some contributions conceptualise time only as a limited, quantifiable resource. This idea of *chronos* informs concepts such as opportunity costs or to some extent labour theories of value¹ (Smith, 1904; von Wieser, 1914; Marx, 1971). *Kairos*, respectively, can be understood qualitatively as the 'right time', a category used in the classic study of rhetoric (Herndl and Licona, 2007), also informing theories of social time drawing on Durkheim; timing, rhythms and schedules; and the experience of time (Bergmann, 1992; Zerubavel, 1976; Bourdieu, 1990). In the contemporary discussion on family policy, sociological approaches around the concept *life-course* have been influential in informing politics (Bertram, 2012a; BMFSFJ, 2006a, 2011a). The life-course scale of thinking about social time is particularly useful to understand the relation between generations, age, rites of passage, and also policy addressed to certain life stages (such as becoming a parent). What such a single temporal scale of investigation, however, is less capable of picking up are the details of everyday life which produce the irreconcilability between family and profession. To that end, time institutions ('Zeitinstitution', Heitkötter and Schneider, 2004) need to be considered in terms of their interfaces, between different *institutions/spaces* and between *interlinking temporal scales (short-term–long-term)* (Lemke, 2000, 2001). I will demonstrate throughout the empirical analysis how social relations in everyday life are informed by cultural norms and formal policies that shape time. These mechanisms generate

¹ Labour theories of value (2.3.3) posit labour time as a resource – hence they deal with *chronos*. However, they also discuss the organisations and social relations of labour, which reconnects *kairos*.

complex situated *selectivities* (Sum and Jessop, 2013; Foucault, 1982) that contribute to sustain asymmetric power relations over time in the gendered experience of parenthood. Critically, I add to the debate that reconcilability problems grow because an increasing individualisation and flexibilisation of temporalities – by definition really – cannot establish a new *collective temporal order* of a ‘total social division of labour’ (Glucksmann, 2005). The result of excessive flexibility is social fragmentation and exclusion. How so?

First, a synchronisation of dominant (paid) work and subjected caring activities, wherein the dominant activities are flexible, cannot be achieved without dramatically increasing the temporal disempowerment of those engaged in the subjected activities. For example, if both parents organise their lives according to their employers’ preference for an “unencumbered worker” (Acker, 1990, 2009), public childcare workers need to be more flexibly available, at worst 24/7, and children cannot choose their carer. Defamilialisation of childcare in the wider context of recommodification creates reconcilability at the expense of parents, practitioners, and children’s disempowerment over time together.

Secondly, if schedules are flexibly and externally determined, the interfaces between employment and caring cannot be predictably organised by the individual, which creates a permanent need to ‘manage time’, which itself is often experienced as stressful and frustrating. The work necessary to coordinate time takes up an ever increasing amount of energy and time itself. Long-term planning in subjected spheres of life becomes more risky. Being ‘on call’ professionally undermines the ability to commit to family schedules, such as attending dinner or the daughter’s stereotypical ballet performance. Conflict is bound to follow.

Thirdly, working and caring (even more so!) requires collective time: The perceived inability to coordinate the desired amount of time together, with co-workers and with family, can explain parents’ widespread experience of time scarcity. A key contribution this dissertation emphasises is that it is not ever simply time per se that is scarce. Nor can irreconcilability be fully explained by a lack of disposable time or a lack of autonomy over time. It is also a growing shortfall of the availability

of regular *time together* in combination with an *unpredictability* of the future that makes people unhappy. In other words, it is a growing mismatch of realisable collective and individual time allocations with cultural expectations what constitutes 'good' time-use, where the former have been forcefully *restricted* while the latter have been *expanded*. There is a conflict between *chronos* and *kairos*. The result is a higher risk for social exclusion due to a lack of matching schedules and individual limitations to improve that condition. As a political consequence, I suggest, regulatory measures to ease reconcilability problems need to address how *collective social time* needs to be reorganised so that individuals can use their disposable time more socially.

Following the theoretical exposition in chapter 2, I will briefly clarify methodological practices and limitations in chapter 3, including statements on generalisability (3.1), interview techniques (3.2), participant selection (3.4), and analytical insights gathered throughout fieldwork (3.4). The latter pertain to methodological issues with time data and categories, and the political nature of coding time-uses.

Empirically, this dissertation mobilises the above argument on collective time scarcity to critically analyse how childcare is governed and enacted locally in the case of the city of Cologne, North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW), Germany. I focussed on NRW, first, because public childcare in Germany is organised on the federal state level as the highest instance – consequently there is no 'all German' childcare regime to discuss; and second, the multitude of local relations which I aim to map makes it difficult to consider more than one federal state within the practical limitations of this study. The focus of this project is to study social relations and levels of governance in depth, rather than comparative breadth. The choice for Cologne as a municipality and NRW among all federal states was random from an academic perspective. Personal connections in Cologne made it the most accessible case. To delimit the case further, I have focussed on professionals, who are the primary target of recent reforms, and who have consistently been reported as those who experience time scarcities and who orient the most to 'new' adult-worker-model (van den Scott, 2014; Hamermesh and Lee, 2007; Daly, 2011b). To assess the

hegemony of reform discourses, which I put in question, they provide a most-likely case.

As I will elaborate in section 4.1, family-work reconcilability in Germany is predominantly understood in the terms of a discourse promoted by the family ministry. This narrative is rather openly instrumental in positing increased female labour market participation and fertility as a solution to skills shortages and shrinking/aging societies. It promises that a set of recent reforms (parental leave and public childcare expansion) have created a better environment for parents, in particular mothers, to remain active in the labour market while raising young children. Simply put, the discourse promotes the “adult-worker-model” (Daly, 2011b).

In response to my first research question I found that along different phases of parenthood ‘time problems’ take on different shapes: before birth, they occur in the question of whether children are wanted at all. If so, the question remains *when* children should be had (see section 4.2). Planning a pregnancy, in particular for prospective mothers, involved a series of judgments about the stability of her employment, and the proximity of additional support (notably grandparents). This time problem is situated on the life course scale for the age group 27-35, and has been discussed in terms of a “rush hour of life” in which developments in professional and private life tend to occur at a rapid pace, and come into conflict with another (Bujard and Panova, 2014).

Throughout pregnancy the taking of parental leave needed to be coordinated (see section 4.3). Centrally this involves the decision which parent takes *how much* leave and *when*. This decision-making process is heavily informed by economic considerations, shaped by the logic how parental benefit is paid. Since she earned less, it was usually argued during my interviews, mothers took the bulk of leave. This gendered economic dynamic derives from labour market segregation and pay gaps. Decisions which professions young women choose precede family planning as a root for inequality. As an additional mechanism, expectations towards mothers by employers have remained quite conservative, which impacts hiring and promotion

decisions, and in turn the economic rationale of leave decisions by couples. This gendered pattern then reaffirms employers' conservative image of mothers-as-leave-takers in a vicious cycle. Daddy-months and similar policy incentives to promote shared parental leave have been tentative in scope and have thus not substantially altered this dynamic. In consequence, the double-burden and related experience of time scarcity affects mothers most, together with the disappointment and frustration of declining status in their professional lives. It is therefore understandable that highly-skilled women who anticipate these consequences and prioritise their profession remain intentionally childless. I conclude that only a significantly deeper involvement of fathers in domestic work and care can lead to a win-win situation between macroeconomic and equality concerns. The leave-taking dynamic described above works across different time scales: working weeks, leave months and years, as well as long-term life course consequences.

Moreover, as previously indicated, the temporal structures of the 'private sphere' have not adjusted at the same pace as the 'public sphere' of employment (see section 4.4). Not 'even', but 'particularly' privileged professional parents have reconcilability problems. Realities diverge substantially from dominant discourses in their social milieu. The domestic division of labour in households remains gendered, despite a widespread inability to *legitimise* this fact. Especially mothers found themselves in a daily life that perpetually produced mismatches between ideals, expectations, and experiences. Manifold temporal norms and an inability to coordinate these without feeling rushed gave rise not only to a feeling of trying to 'live two or three lives within a single one', but also to work 'two or three shifts within one single week' (Hochschild, 2003b; Knauß, 2015). Caught between egalitarian ideals and gendered realities, couples appear to rely on certain narratives ('family myths') that justify their own domestic setting (4.4.1). In addition extended family, especially grandparents, takes on an important role in supporting parents (4.4.2.1). Beyond the family, civil society's rhythms have also remained organised along the old standard working week (4.4.2.2). Not only does this limit participation for flexible workers; the provision of voluntary labour is also rooted in the 'free time' of workers. Inclines in voluntary work around children also suggest

that paid work in childcare needs this supplement. These resources, however, are under pressure by any further expansion of the full-time adult-worker-model. In total, the relative fixity of schedules in the 'private sphere' point to asynchronicities to the 'unencumbered' adult-worker-model that is expected from fathers, and which reconcilability Discourses promote for professional mothers beyond the parental-leave phase. The substantive temporal limitations to reconcilability, I will argue below, undermine the government's struggle to establish an adult-worker hegemony.

In response to the second research question I therefore argue that parental leave reforms have very clearly shaped the reconcilability problems experienced by parents, especially mothers. In fact, the discourse promoting the adult-worker-model is in many respects responsible for their frequent frustration, because the government raised expectations it cannot fulfil. The adult-worker-model in its 'ideal' form requires a simultaneous organisation of work and family life across temporal scales for all parents. The current temporal structures in Germany do not make that possible. The consequence is a 'one-and-half-breadwinner-model', in which she works part-time. For highly-skilled women, the quality of part-time work is often unattractive. 'Attractive work' is commonly offered in a classical career structure, which requires an 'unencumbered' full-time worker, often beyond the tariff standards of ca. 40h/week. Breaks for parental leave, and subsequent part-time employment due to limited childcare and school opening hours, often still enforce a *sequential* life-course for mothers, which interrupts any possible career trajectory. The lagging expansion of ECEC infrastructure prevents a holistic move away from familialised childcare. The current consequence of this half-way transition is a series of broken interfaces between social (temporal) norms in different institutional schedules. For example: kindergartens are open between 7:30–16:30 cannot cover most working times, sometimes not even those of teachers in part-time employment (124).

Having established this narrative of variegated time problems in chapter 4, I will turn my attention in chapter 4 to the most important shift I perceive in the German ECEC landscape: the expansion of public childcare. In an introductory section (5.1), I

will address the ideational history of childcare in Germany, and how this affects contemporary debates. I will trace the emergence of the kindergarten during the industrial revolution, the clash of religious and democratic ideas informing early institutions; the distinct traditions between East and West Germany during the separation; and for the West German case the Kinderladen movement in the dynamic of 1968; and the social investment logic (Jenson, 2009) that comes to inform German family and education policy after the Sputnik (1970s) and PISA shocks (2000s). Both led to an expansion of public childcare, first for children over three, and now also for children under the age of three. This last expansion goes hand in hand with an ongoing moral debate over age-appropriate care for infants.

I will then outline the organisational landscape of German childcare provision (5.2), discussing the central role of non-statutory welfare providers and the gradual replacement of subsidiarity with a market logic *without* privatisation. This lays the foundations for the central case study of the North-Rhine Westphalian “KiBiz” reform (5.3). First, I will discuss childcare slot scarcities and slot allocation selectivities (5.3.1). These selectivities are identity-bound in large part, but also have temporal dimensions, such as application timings, or the match between children’s age and the *Kitajahr* (business year of the childcare facility). Secondly, I will discuss the reasons why there is a slot scarcity, looking into the financial and substantive economy of public childcare (5.3.2). Financial resources put into expansion programmes have rapidly increased public provision in the last decade, yet supply lags behind booming demand in large and growing cities such as Cologne². I will conclude that past political neglect and current underfinancing are perpetuating skills shortages due to unattractive working conditions. Strict price regulations in the KiBiz do not provide the necessary impulses for market growth. Thirdly, I will delve deeper into the time problems discernible in the provision of public childcare (5.3.3): next to a moral conflict between neo-familialist and third-

² In particular the large district-free cities such as Berlin, Hamburg, Leipzig, Frankfurt – as well as Cologne – are affected by reurbanisation and a baby boom resulting from the influx of young people. Between 2005 and 2015 these cities were inhabited by more than 15% additional children aged 0-6 (FES, 2017, p. 11). In Cologne a plus of 15.3% of young children is straining infrastructure dedicated to them.

way ideologies in the political dynamic of reforms, the scarcity of slots and the modalities of allocation result in timing uncertainties in the transition of children from familial into institutional care. Planning uncertainties are exacerbated by institutional asynchronicities, such as exemplified by restricted opening-hours above.

In the last section, 5.4, I will move to the perspective of practitioners and providers, and jointly discuss two issues: policy enactment and childcare quality. Child-staff ratios are the central quantitative measure for quality. This indicator has become part of more formalised accounting procedures prescribed for public childcare facilities. Formalisation has also taken place through the implementation of quality management systems, which include the systematic and written observation of children's development. Documentation procedures come into conflict with practitioners' ideas about good practice because they take time away from interaction with children. Time constraints also put pressure on participatory styles of leadership, which are important to practitioners. Here, time is a resource problem, translating into everyday scheduling issues.

As the overall outcome, the resources – in particular time, that is to say, labour – dedicated to childcare remain too low to fulfil qualitative expectations of 'good' pedagogic or parental practice, or yield fair wages. In this relative sense one can speak of an unsustainable division of resources and power between production and social reproduction in Germany, even for privileged professional families. High normative standards for education and care produce guilty consciences for those who perpetually 'have no time'. To solve the overall issue, more resources in public childcare and more time to build infrastructure are needed. The infrastructure problem might be resolved in another ten years, provided that public financing is further improved. But that does not resolve the power balance between those interested in commodified parents, and those interested in good living standards for families and good conditions for children to grow up well. Normative disagreements over 'good' time allocation remain a core site of political struggle.

1 Three Narratives on a Crisis of Care: A Literature Review

This project seeks to discuss reconcilability problems between family and professional life from an everyday perspective, centred on the social relations of parents: their relations to the labour market, and to childcare practitioners and managers. This research strategy is juxtaposed to, and critically examines, established narratives of social change in Feminist Political Economy (1.1), Feminist Economics (1.2), and Welfare State Theory, including policy analyses (1.3). Whereas feminist political economists identify a ‘crisis of care’ in the progression of neoliberal and third-way policy (Fraser, 2016), neo-institutional welfare state theorists have emphasised the resilience of the welfare state in the face of globalisation (Pierson, 1998). Amidst differing interpretations of changes in the coverage and quality of social protection, the ‘new social risks’ literature presents crisis as the development of new sources of risk that established welfare policies fail to address (Bonoli, 2005). Feminist economists have raised the central issue of gender equity and unpaid work to draw attention to the selective recognition of work, marginalising the activities carried out in the ‘private’ sphere (Himmelweit, 1995; Power, 2004). Debates on changing life-courses under changing institutional regimes approach the topic through an analysis of German policy (Bertram, 2009). This chapter delivers a review of these narratives, outlining how the idea of a scarcity of care resources has been treated in the respective literatures.

I will suggest that a time-focussed approach that problematises the institutionalised division of work and distribution of resources is necessary to show that reconcilability conflicts result from a contradiction between role expectations and temporal resources, which follows the increased labour market activation of women. While that overall conclusion is well-established in literature I discuss below, only the situated examination reveals the exact points of conflict, the mismatches between experiences and expectations, which only become observable in the actual micro-relations of the everyday. The German case is crucial as an example of a conservative welfare state under substantial reform – but as I will

discuss in the empirical sections, also as a society that is encountering substantial conflict over the morality and economy of ECEC.

1.1 The Feminist Political Economy of Social Reproduction

This section looks at reconcilability problems from the perspective established by the literature discussing a *crisis of care*. Encompassing phenomena of “time poverty”, “family-work balance” or “social depletion”, the crisis of care concept refers to various pressures that disable important capabilities to maintain families, communities, and societies (Fraser, 2016, p. 99). To unpack what crisis of care means, I will review how *social reproduction* has been theorised in Feminist Political Economy (FPE).

Social reproduction is a key concept around which FPE evolves. It refers to the biological reproduction of human beings, but also to the care and educational work necessary to recreate social bonds, communities, values, and skills (Steans and Tepe, 2010, p. 809; Bakker and Gill, 2003b, p. 32). Relevant public discourses revolve around demographic change, population ageing, reconcilability of family and work, childlessness, public childcare, quality in education, and skills shortages. FPE has theorised disruptions in these processes as the effect of unfettered capital accumulation hollowing out capacities of communities and households for social provisioning, undermining the conditions for the reproduction of capital accumulation itself. According to Bakker & Gill, this leads to

“the emergence of a global contradiction between the extended power of capital (and its protection by the state) and not only sustainable but also progressive forms of social reproduction for the majority of the world’s population. (Bakker and Gill, 2003a, p. 4)

One example of theorising this contradiction is given in Fraser’s *crisis of care* concept:

“My claim is that every form of capitalist society harbours a deep-seated social-reproductive ‘crisis tendency’ or contradiction: on the one hand, social reproduction is a condition of possibility for sustained capital accumulation; on the other, capitalism’s orientation to unlimited accumulation tends to destabilize the very processes of social reproduction on which it relies.” (Fraser, 2016, p. 100)

Fraser understands this crisis to be a result of a systemic contradiction between capitalism and social reproduction, in which the expansion of self-regulating markets threatens social security. She is drawing on Polanyi’s (2001) theory of *fictitious commodities* in order to problematise the marketisation of land, human labour, and money. Polanyi took the nature of these three production factors to be incompatible with commodification, because none were produced in markets themselves, and thus did not react to changes in demand. Frictions invariably ensuing over their use or disuse (e.g. unemployment) would bring about a *double movement*, in which political forces would gather to prevent further marketisation in order to protect society. Fraser criticises Polanyi’s framework for naturalising pre-capitalist forms of production, whitewashing relations of domination inherent in non-market relationships, such as slavery, patriarchy, or feudalism (Fraser, 2014). Therefore she expands Polanyi’s dual framework of marketisation and social protection by a third pillar: emancipation. Emancipation refers to the liberations of dominated people from inequalities inherent in social structures such as race and gender. It becomes theoretically possible in Fraser’s model to consider the emancipatory effects marketisation can have on dominated groups, insofar as that market structures can lead to more equitable outcomes than other cultural hierarchies. For these groups “exploitation represents an advance” (Fraser, 2014, p. 551).

Struggles around the provision of care represent a clear example of such a three-sided conflict between marketisation, emancipation, and social security. Shifting responsibilities between market, state, and family indicate a new configuration of economic exchange, redistribution, and reciprocity (Polanyi, 1957, p. 250).

Observed shortages in social reproduction suggest that recent reconfigurations – an expansion of market relations, but also a retrenchment of the welfare state in

developed countries – are leading to unsustainable practices in the distribution of risks and resources, contributing to human suffering and insecurity. These shifting economic and social relations clearly exhibit an international dynamic. Diminished capabilities or incentives to care for privileged strata of women displace care work along global care chains, deferring care shortages to disadvantaged women (Young, 2001; Fraser, 2016). Examples for this are Philippine maids in Hong Kong, Polish nurses in German elderly care, or Latin American nannies in the US.

A central concern articulated from this feminist perspective is that whereas care requires resources, predominantly in the form of labour, this labour is often un- or underpaid and thus does not sustain the economic independence of the carer. Expectations that females should provide the bulk of this labour in domestic settings (male-breadwinner-model) are incompatible with demands for gender equality that emphasise the economic independence of the individual from the family (adult-worker-model, Daly, 2011b). Structurally disadvantaged in an economic system that distributes resources in exchange for money, women have been pressed to find ways of participating in paid work on top of their caring duties, whereas men's involvement in care has not risen much (see 1.3.1 for details). Where the partial shedding of care work by more privileged women is understood as emancipation, the 'burden of care' is placed upon those with less resources, lower wages, and so forth, instead of being shared more equally by all members of society. This redistribution of care work is part of a broader struggle in the relations of social reproduction outlined above.

To make sense of care work in more theoretical and historical depth, I will turn to conceptual discussions of the nature of 'work', unpaid labour, and the division of labour within and beyond the nuclear family below. Empirical findings will be discussed in section 4.4.1.

1.2 Unpaid Work, Affective Relations

The concept of unpaid work was developed by feminist economists as a critique to the exclusion of the domestic sphere from standard economic theory. Seminal in this field is the contribution of Susan Himmelweit (1995). Whereas the 'discovery of unpaid work' may be seen as one of the great successes of second-wave feminism, Himmelweit identifies this expansion of the concept 'work' as deeply problematic. She suggests that general understandings of work are modelled on male industrial labour relations, emphasising three characteristics: 1) the time and energy work takes, and hence its opportunity cost; 2) the division of labour; and 3) work as something independent from the worker – a commodity.

“First, work took time and energy for a purpose and therefore had an opportunity cost in terms of what could otherwise be done; women who did housework were therefore disadvantaged by having their time and energy taken up in this way.

Second, work formed part of a division of labor; women doing housework therefore contributed to the division of labor both at the household and at the societal level.

Third, work is separable from the worker and could be done by others; there was no inherent reason why women had to do all the housework; men could and should do their share of it too.” (Himmelweit, 1995, p. 4)

Whereas this conception made it possible to address the arbitrariness of women's traditional role, it also advanced an impersonal view of social relations that, as I will elaborate further, is deeply problematic when applied to care.

The first aspect of *work* underlines the physical limits to the amount of work that can be done, time as “an ‘endless bottleneck’ of individual and collective activity” (Bergmann, 1992, p. 109). Understandings of time scarcity, efficiency, and opportunity costs depend on such a view of working time (chronos).

Incentives directed at time-use, for instance policies aiming to increase female labour market participation, apply this perception of work and time instrumentally.

The second aspect highlights a central phenomenon in capitalist development: a specialised division of labour, and the social hierarchies that interlink with

occupational status. This pertains to the development of industrial social strata, as well as to the division of labour between the market and the household, men and women. It further extends to the roles of organisations such as Church or state, and distinct pathways to finance these organisations, resulting in various social relations of economic dependence. The division of labour co-exists with institutional schedules. Examples are working hours, opening hours, deadlines or timetables. These pose limits on time-use decisions, and pre-structure daily life.

The third aspect enquires into the nature of commodities, as already discussed by Marx (1993). The crucial aspect that Himmelweit seeks to emphasise is that whereas the manufactured good can be physically separated from the worker, and therefore its production separated from the conditions of exchange, this separation is not possible for services, and in particular not possible for services that include an affective interpersonal component, such as care does.

Himmelweit's discussion relates back to the definition of social reproduction as processes that generate social bonds and communities. Care therein is not reducible to work, because next to its functional tasks ('wiping bottoms'), care is also defined by *affective relationships*. Himmelweit (1995) observes varying degrees of outsourcing, substitution, and visibility across different traditional household tasks. Less affective activities, such as cleaning, are routinely purchased on the market. Tasks such as cooking or washing are replaced ever more often by processed foods, takeaway, or washing machines. However, affective activities such as child- and elderly care are among the last territories of family relations that resist commodification. Here, a *recognition of care as work* is most contested.

Given a frequent embeddedness in other activities, care is difficult to adequately represent in time-use surveys (see 3.4 for a methodological discussion). Patterns how populations on average split their time between household and workplace are a long-standing concern of government, because in aggregate, personal behaviours create the overall volume of labour power in different spheres. Foucault (2003, p. 143) dates a conscious governmental concern with population management to the end of the 18th century. Substantial research has been done at the juncture

between Economics and Demography to explain time-use patterns between paid and unpaid work, childcare, and leisure (Becker, 1985; Bittman and Wajcman, 2000; Gronau, 1977; Kimmel and Connelly, 2007). In many regards time-use models have evolved from initial shortcomings in accounting for domestic labour. But Himmelweit's critique that Economics treat housework indiscriminately as unpaid labour pertains not only to a lack of early theoretical differentiation between categories. Himmelweit problematised the inseparability of care and carer, and addressed the conflicted valuation of work and leisure. In particular the simultaneity of domestic activities can cause uncertainty in the categorisation of time, as well as the overlapping of categories, for example in paid care work. It is important to note that boundary discussions over categories – as I will demonstrate in 3.4 and 4.4.1 – are not just a methodological issue, but a political one, aiming at social recognition.

The extension of the concept 'work' from paid labour to caring activities is potentially dangerous. Hegemonic ideas in the industrial working world shape common interpretations of 'work'. These include *efficiency* and *productivity*, measured in so many tasks N executed in time T . Accounting practices in paid care already adopt these constructions of *value* (see 5.4). By naming care 'work', and valuing care as work, something is gained: the legitimacy to demand recognition and remuneration, for example as parental benefits or better wages. But something could also be lost – a valuation of affective relationships and the domestic activities as ends in themselves:

“... the ability to give value to the personal and relational aspects of much domestic activity. By insisting that domestic contributions are valued as 'work,' much of such caring or self-fulfilling activity is excluded and remains in the background, essential to but unrecognized by the economics of work and by a society that operates within it.”
(Himmelweit, 1995, p. 2)

Folbre has summarised succinctly how uncertainties over valuations of care enter into a bigger time-use picture:

“If caring is its own reward, it need not command an economic return. But if caring labor receives no economic return at all, will it persist? If the economic costs of caring go up, will the supply of it decline?” (Folbre, 1995, p. 74)

The concern that permeates Feminist Economics is that if care is *undervalued*, and care work underpaid, its supply will either decline, or be enforced.

Significant aspects of the struggle around care are about divergent opinions how well money given for care work represents the practical, cultural valuation of care. Crisis tendencies can therefore be understood as a structural mismatch between the actual pricing of care versus the hypothetical price required to meet demands according to cultural ideals. Misregulation leads to market failure (see 5.3.2.5). Important to take away from this discussion, however, is that a ‘crisis of care’ should not be understood as a supply shortage only. Albeit underpayment is a cause of scarcities of care visible today (5.3.2.3), these scarcities cannot be understood *just* as market failure – because care is more than a commodity. Rather than reducing the problem of care supply to wage levels and opportunity costs, care needs to be viewed as a social relation that has *affective*, and therefore *special organisational requirements*.

Contradictions emerge when the time and space for lasting personal relations come under pressure through an expansion and acceleration of accumulation-related activities. It is widely acknowledged that in care the quantity is equally important to the quality of provision (5.4.1). In public childcare, it is not only the size of groups and opening hours that matter, but also the continuity of relations between carer and child, and the pedagogical conception of the daily work. Therefore the indicators we use to evaluate care should not be the same as the ones commonly used to describe industrial performance, because they need to assess very different processes and social relations.

I suggest the debate over the relation between paid and unpaid work, care, and leisure should take place on a less abstract level in order to better understand the institutional determinants of different time-use patterns as they holistically affect lived reality. The remainder of this chapter will address the key institutions that regulate social distribution in the modern welfare state and act as a

framework for everyday life. It will do so first by reviewing more general, global accounts of welfare state restructuring, and then delve into the Germany-specific discussion of policy changes and life-course effects.

1.3 Welfare State Restructuring

Welfare State Theory (WST) has its intellectual focus on the mediating function of welfare states between economic and social relations on an international and national scale. In the last decades, WST has been dominated by research problematising the ‘post-industrial trilemma’, which theorises a trade-off between employment, income equality, and fiscal balance (Pierson, 2001; Iversen and Wren, 1998; for a critique Lewis, Peng and Ryner, 2018). This body of knowledge has informed the EU’s Lisbon Agenda and third-way policy (Giddens, 1998), and widely been used to justify welfare state retrenchment. The central purpose of this section is to outline what WST can contribute to explain family-work reconciliation problems. To that point I inquire how potential crises of welfare states are theorised, and how these theories address the relevance of care work to the stability of societies and states. Here it is helpful to distinguish between two narratives of crisis, one basing its causal explanation on globalisation and one on post-industrialisation.

Put briefly, globalisation approaches posit global pressure – more precisely global competition in free markets – as the ultimate driving force or limiting condition of domestic social policy. This narrative in its strong form is reflected in variations of structural dependency theories of the state on capital, which assert that the capitalist rationale to invest under the best conditions for profit maximisation forces states into competition with other states over business confidence in capital returns. This “race to the bottom” (Castles, 2007) undermines the sovereign power of government vis-à-vis investors and enforces a deregulation of social security. Whereas the rhetoric of ‘no alternatives’ to neoliberal restructuring has evidently found a certain appeal amongst Western political parties in the devising and legitimisation of austerity politics and labour market deregulation, the adequacy of

this overall explanation has been challenged on theoretical and empirical grounds (Hay, 2004; Schwartz, 2001). It fails to explain empirical variations in statistical indicators, as well as policy responses between states, and relies on ex-ante functional explanations. Germany, for example, is a highly competitive state with a highly positive trade-balance: urgent economic necessity is an insufficient explanation for reform. Institutionally sensitive theories of global pressures, prominently in the *varieties of capitalism* (VoC) literature, cannot be dismissed as easily. They centrally hold that because institutions vary across countries, unitary global pressures are refracted differently in domestic institutional settings and have divergent local outcomes (Hay, 2004; Garrett, 1998; Korpi, 2006). The dimension of critique I want to highlight here is that VoC theories still reduce the primary causes of welfare state retrenchment to international capitalist competition (see Pierson, 1998 below). The globalisation narrative is thus predisposed to understand ‘crisis’ as an economic or a fiscal crisis, a crisis of the welfare state vis-à-vis the global market. Its strength lies in revealing struggles between nation states and global capital, an approach through which it can provide an explanation for austerity and sovereign debt, which in turn becomes relevant when discussing domestic developments in social policy. It does not, however, address care in any practical manner beyond social expenses.

In order to talk about a crisis of *care*, the second narrative of welfare state change is significantly more helpful. This literature is informed by Bonoli’s definition of *new social risks*, understood as situations in which “individuals experience welfare losses [...] that have arisen as a result of the socioeconomic transformations [...] that are generally subsumed under the heading of postindustrialization” (Bonoli, 2007). The postindustrialisation narrative revolves around the twin tenets of *demographic change* and *labour market restructuring*, the latter referring to deindustrialisation and the growth of service industries. These concepts pertain to changes in familial and work relations, and hence reveal more clearly how care activities are bound up in a specific division of labour, and the political means that support it. The crucial difference compared to the globalisation narrative is that in the

postindustrialisation narrative pressures on the welfare state are explained to originate from within society, rather than the international political economy:

“Welfare states indeed face unprecedented budgetary stress, but this is primarily related to *endogenous* processes of social change, as the economic profiles of affluent societies have become increasingly ‘post-industrial’ and as their welfare states have matured and their populations have grown older. These important shifts are related only loosely, if at all, to the changing international economy. To focus on globalization is to mistake the essential nature of the problem.” (Pierson, 1998, emphasis added)

While Pierson maintains the perspective expressed in the globalisation narrative that welfare states are in a fiscal crisis, he replaces international with endogenous pressures. The two central dimensions these pressures take are addressed below: labour market restructuring and demographic change. They illuminate how aspects of social reproduction interlink with aspects of capitalist accumulation. Hence I dispense with the globalisation – postindustrialisation dichotomy below, in favour of more nuanced, historicised discussion how global and domestic socio-economic phenomena interlink.

1.3.1 German Labour Market Restructuring

Germany until the 1990s has consistently been described as a conservative ‘social insurance state’ with a strong male-breadwinner-model (Esping-Andersen, 1990). With full employment and relatively high wages throughout the boom of the post-war decades, the middle classes of the mid-20th century could afford to live modestly on one *family wage*. Social policy in this ‘Fordist’³ (Jessop, 1992) era was primarily set to protect the husband’s income, whereas other members of the family derived their welfare indirectly through the husband. The concept of *decommodification*, framed by Esping-Andersen (1990), describes the relative

³ Aglietta (1998) and other regulation school proponents coined the phrase Fordism to describe industrial relations after WW2. It is unrelated to the actual practices of Ford before unionisation in 1941 (Neilson and Rossiter, 2008).

independence of the politically organised male industrial worker from the risks of the labour market through social insurance. In the mid-20th century, in an international policy environment strongly influenced by Keynesian economics, social partnership maintained a relatively low stratification of German society.

As Lewis (1992) points out, Esping-Andersen's initial conceptualisation of decommodification is blind to the situation of women in the *male-breadwinner-model* as "welfare-dependent". It overlooks the contribution women's unpaid work makes to the independence of men to take up full employment or invest free time into other forms of public life. It marginalises the necessity of unpaid work to social reproduction, as well as the necessity of social reproduction to enable industrial production. Furthermore it naturalises the household as a unit of solidarity and welfare provision, taking for granted the nuclear family structure, caring relationships, and the ability of the breadwinner to generate an income to provide for the whole family, either through employment or welfare entitlements.

The decline of the male-breadwinner-model must be understood not just as a new dynamic of family and gender relationships, but also as a necessary response of households unable to access a family wage in a different socio-economic and political context.

"The central economic difference to the Fordist epoch families in Germany are gradually adjusting to since the late decades of the 20th century is the erosion of the family wage, which means in effect for the majority of the population that two wages are now necessary to provide an economic base for the family." (Bertram, 2012a, p. 616)

Falling real wages have been widely understood as a reaction to increased international pressures for competitiveness. Scholarly debate about how Germany, the "sick man of Europe" in the 1990s, became an "economic superstar" in the 2010s has identified either the dynamics of the Eurozone or falling labour unit costs as the causes of current economic "success" (Dustmann *et al.*, 2014). Success is here understood as low unemployment, especially during the economic crisis of 2008. Studies of the *Modell Deutschland*, associated with the VoC approach, characterised Germany through its system of industrial relations, that is: collective

bargaining between unions and employer associations on the national, regional and sectoral level, but also in work councils involved in codetermination on the firm-level (Allen, 1990). Upmarket high-technology and quality production evaded international competition. This created an environment in which a highly skilled and unionised labour force had the institutional means and power to partake proportionally in economic growth. The decentralisation of these institutions has been seen as the main mechanism through which German collective wage bargaining has been liberalised in the last two decades. The increased flexibility of decentralised industrial relations has been lauded by some as an advantage in a globally changing and challenging economy, because it enabled wage repression in times of crisis (Dustmann *et al.*, 2014). Others view these developments more critically, pointing to the redistributive consequences of what Baccaro and Benassi (2014) call the transition of the German economy from a wage-led to a profit-led growth model. The authors identify three trends: “a decline in the wage share; the compression of domestic consumption from 1990 on, and the acceleration in exports as a percentage of GDP in the same period” (ibid). The consequence is a widely-reported polarisation of wealth, to which growing inequalities in wage income due to increased and deregulated part-time work contribute considerably (Biewen and Juhasz, 2012; Gornig and Goebel, 2016).

Deregulation since the 1970s has been traced in terms of flexibility (Streeck, 2009) and dualisation (Eichhorst and Marx, 2011), the coexistence of a relatively protected and a relatively unprotected labour market, and the so-called Hartz reforms (2002–3), which allowed for the expansion of agency/temporary work and mini-jobs, and restructured unemployment benefits. Flexibility was mainly achieved by leaving newcomers to the labour market with fewer protections, while established workers were publicly compensated or remained in protected spheres of the labour market (Streeck, 2009). These newcomers are disproportionately female and young people. Biewen & Luhasz (2012) suggest that 80% of overall rises in inequality between 2000 and 2007 can be attributed to wage incomes, employment changes, and the tax system. Especially the expansion of part-time work had an impact on social inequality. Furthermore, not all sectors and income

percentiles have been affected by real wage declines. Export-oriented manufacturing industries provide the best wages to their higher ranks, whereas domestic industries and lower paid workers are left out of any trickle-down effect from export-led growth (see Dustmann *et al.*, 2014 for a detailed analysis). These trends in industrial production and regulation cause a polarisation of income in German society.

Labour market segregation, based on gender, migration background, educational and class origin, provides the intersectional grid through which this polarisation is mediated. Groups concentrated in non-tradable industries and low-skilled services, such as women, are disadvantaged by the wage developments in their sectors. The German gender pay gap, perhaps the most popular indicator for labour market discrimination, has remained stable at about 22% in the last decades. Occupational segregation explains part of the West German gender pay gap, and “wage penalties” for women have increased over time (Lauer, 2000, p. 22)⁴. This segregation has horizontal dimensions between industries, as well as vertical dimensions in occupational hierarchies. Women continue to be disadvantaged in both dimensions (Dressel and Wanger, 2008). Part-time work and segregation explained 16% of the 22% pay gap in 2014 (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2017b). Some authors have pointed out that policies promoting adult-worker-models can have adverse effects on the quality of female employment (Hegewisch and Gornick, 2011). Occupational gender segregation is particularly high in well-developed welfare states, such as Sweden (Mandel and Semyonov, 2006). It is furthermore important to note that public sector dismantling under austerity policies has a disproportionate effect on women, who are crowded in public skilled part-time employment (Rubery and Rafferty, 2013).

Next to segregation and pay gaps, female labour market participation has been a key indicator of economic gender relations. The activation of women into the labour market has not been a linear development in the latest decades, but rather oscillates with the expansion or contraction of the labour market. Female labour

⁴ The study focusses on West Germany since the mid-1980s.

market participation quotas have been rising steadily to 68% in 2006, in accordance with EU Lisbon agenda policy targets. This had led occasionally to a false conception of linear progress in women's employment. Visible in Figure 1 are the increase at the turn of the century, during the Second World War, and the dip in 1950. Women who during the war had occupied all kinds of jobs in all kinds of industries were 'sent back to the stove' by government decree to make room for returning men.

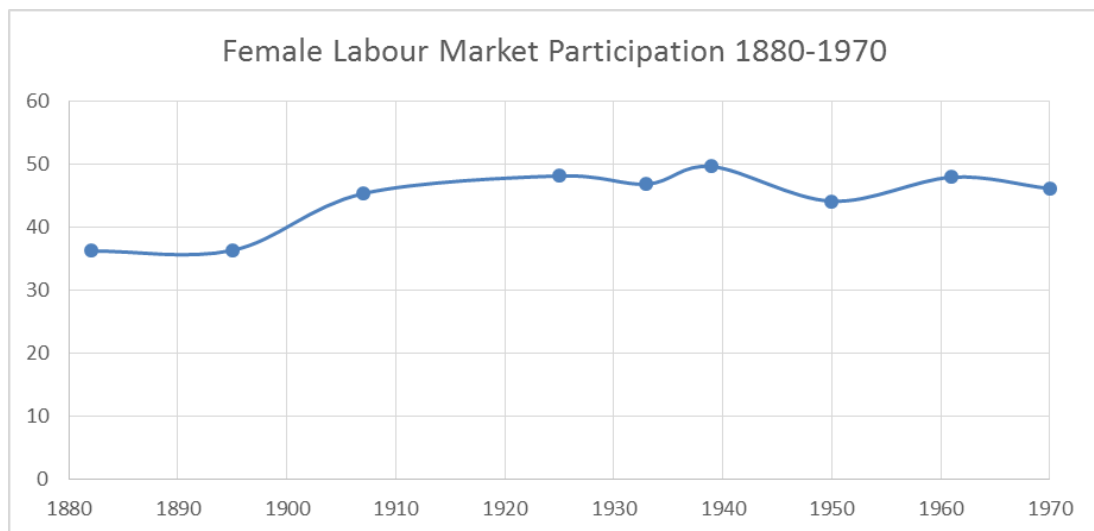


Figure 1 Historical Female Labour Market Participation (Willms-Herget and Stockmann, 1982)⁵

It is widely postulated that in breaking up ideas of female and male occupations, the World Wars acted as a major source of emancipation, both professionally and privately. The hardship of the war also made the idea of marriage as partnership legitimate (Frevert, 1989, p. 265). All the more confusing one might find the West German return to a male-breadwinner-model in the 1950s–60s. Frevert explains this return with respect to the economic shortages and greater need of home production in the early post-war era. With the inflows of US capital and general economic recovery after 1952, consumerism took hold in West German society. In 1962, 52% of households owned a fridge, 79% a radio, and 34% a washing machine (ibid). Female employment rose when substituting household labour for employment became economically sensible to enable desired consumption

⁵ Historical data series of women's employment face the difficulty of changing German borders (Deutsches Reich to West Germany), and irregular statistical coverage. Willms-Herget & Stockmann (1982) have collected data from official statistics (Berufszählung, Mikrozensus) since 1880 to reconstruct female labour market participation.

patterns. In this historical context sociological and religious critiques of consumerism condemned working mothers as selfish for placing consumption and lifestyle over the wellbeing of their families (Frevert, 1989, p. 269). The echo of that critique is palpable in ‘Rabenmutter’ (see p. 168) debates today.

Supporting a thesis of female employment as a ‘buffer’ in overall labour market dynamics, contemporary IAB data reveals that the overall share of female labour *volume* has *declined* between 1991 and 2005 and inclined between 2005–2014 (Dressel and Wanger, 2008; Wanger, 2015), following total trends on the labour market. The lower participation of women visible in the gap between the blue and red line (Figure 2) can be explained through higher amounts of part-time work for women, which tends to be connected to family reasons (Wanger, 2015). It is widely accepted that familialised childcare and elderly care under current labour market and policy conditions are the major driving force through which gender inequality is reproduced. An extension of West German policies to East Germany and substantial losses of employment in the East after reunification must be considered as part of this dynamic.

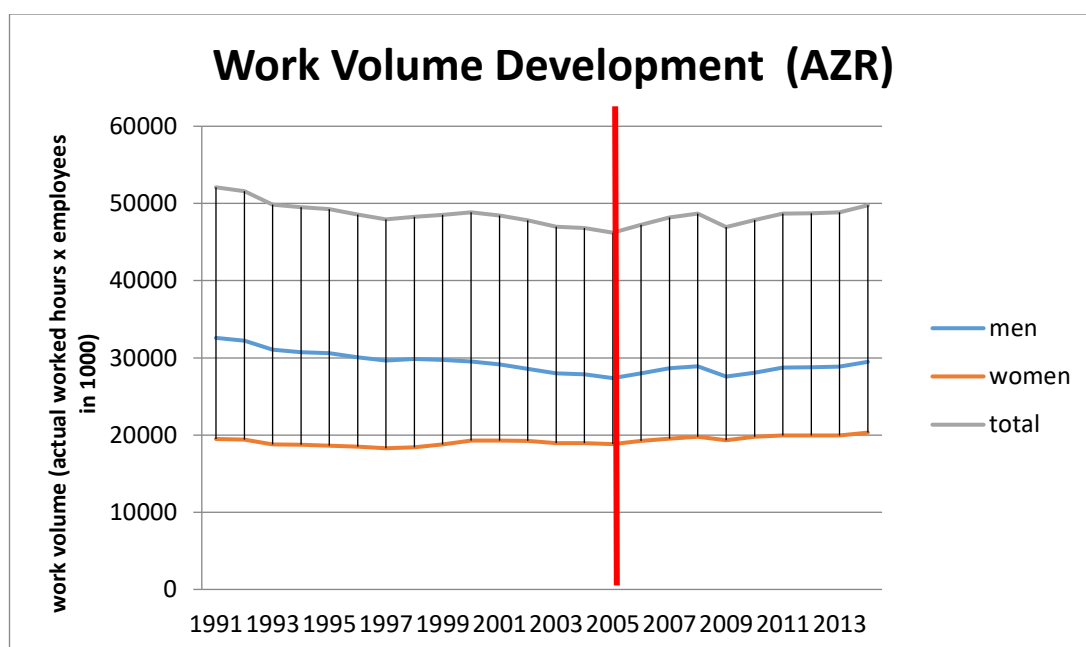


Figure 2 Work Volumes, adapted from Wanger (2015) based on the IAB Arbeitszeitrechnung (AZR)⁶

⁶ Data on work volumes, by considering the hours worked rather than just employment status, provide a much more conclusive overview of labour market developments than participation quotas, which were almost equal in 2014.

Outside of labour markets, most women are economically dependent on their partners, parents, or social benefits. It is in this context that the erosion of the male-breadwinner-model has generated new social risks. These include a lack of adequate public childcare and support for single parents, as well as insufficient social insurance coverage for people with part-time and interrupted working lives. Not only do these risks stem from a change in women's lives relative to the Fordist standard – women also experience these risks much more often than men (Bonoli, 2005).

To summarise, distinct income developments between export and domestic industries, as well as upper and lower income segments of the labour market support a broader diagnosis of income polarisation in Germany since 1990. Studies suggest that part-time work contributes to inequality. Looking back into history, labour market policy towards women has been driven by labour market expansions and contractions, very much visible after the world wars. The hypothesis that current reforms were passed with the support of employers who anticipate a demand for highly skilled female labour, and general shortages in specific industries, especially care, is consistent with the historical account (Seeleib-Kaiser and Toivonen, 2011). A straightforward and inevitable trend of modernisation that entails increasing female employment cannot be assumed in the future. It appears central to analyse therefore how far labour market and family policy reforms are products of demand and supply, and how far they represent the interests of the producers and purchasers of human labour. What this understanding of labour market change disregards is the complementariness of systems of production with systems of reproduction. In other words, a pure labour market explanation deemphasises the domestic division of labour. The likelihood of women working part-time because of an ongoing "hegemony of the mother-child linkage" (Jenson, 2009, p. 472) suggests that the rising inequality reported by Biewen and Luhasz is likely deeply gendered. A higher dependency on public employment and social welfare of female headed households makes women on average more vulnerable to welfare cuts and public sector restructuring. Policies promoting female employment within the EU agenda have emancipatory effects, but their success depends on

social services that defamilialise domestic work in accessible ways, as well as on suitable demand on labour markets. The first condition is not sufficiently met in the German context, as I will illustrate below.

1.3.2 Demographic Change

The second pillar of the postindustrialisation narrative of welfare state development, after labour market restructuring, is demographic change. The literature has identified *aging* and low *fertility* as problems on a national scale. To summarise the current orthodoxy:

“Explorations have been made to link decreasing fertility to the historical co-developments of the destruction of the post-war standard employment and the emergence of flexible employment in parallel to the changing role of women and family relations. Derived from this link the question emerges to what extent family policy reform must be understood as the state intervening in the production of children in line with a pronatalist construction of national interest.” (Streeck, 2009)

“Population aging has raised concerns about the sustainability of public pension systems [...] the largest OECD countries are unsustainable in the long run because they rely almost exclusively on pay-as-you-go schemes. [...] Reductions in the generosity of future public pensions seem inevitable [...] [pronatalist and immigration policies] can make significant contributions to the goal of creating fiscal equilibrium in public pension systems as part of a comprehensive package of reform.” (Bongaarts, 2004, p. 1 & 19ff)

These narratives tend to focus on macroeconomic considerations, for example the sustainability of pension systems. In Germany, the “Generationenvertrag” (generations’ contract), a pay-as-you-go system, uses the current contributions of the working generation to finance benefits for the elderly. A problem is created through a mismatch between this financial mechanism and the logic of entitlements. The benefit is calculated on the basis of past wage incomes of the recipient. As a result of this logic, many recipients feel entitled to maintain the living standards to which they were accustomed. However, with a growing number of dependents in the system, the PAYG mechanism becomes increasingly strained. The cohort of an exceptionally high birth rate in the 1950–60s, the ‘baby-boomers’, is

currently still of working age, but will retire in the coming five to ten years. Hence, a dramatic increase in the ratio of dependents on workers can be expected shortly. One might find it somewhat ironic that improved living conditions, effected through better welfare, are responsible for higher life expectancies, which in turn produce the current 'demographic problem' which European governments face in the maintenance of living standards. In other words, we may see an example where the system has grown to its limits endogenously. This endogenous explanation of crisis, a crisis of social sustainability of given welfare policies, is the central aspect of the post-industrial narrative (Pierson, 2001; Bonoli, 2005). It connects to insights about economic and fiscal crisis thematised in the globalisation narrative, but gives a deeper understanding how social reproduction and care feature as crucial aspects of sustainable societies. Nevertheless, the 'growth to the limits' idea is dependent on a range of assumptions over stable contributions and entitlements, which do not reflect reality. Rather than a full explanation, it might be better regarded as an aspect of change worth considering in a more complex picture.

An alternative angle on demographic change can be found in the sociology on gendered *life-courses*. When comparing the reference years of 1960 and 2000, representative for the Fordist and contemporary age, one can identify a series of structural changes in "educational-majority" life-courses of Germans (Figure 3). First, lives are longer today, and full adulthood comes later. What is meant by full adulthood is economic independence from the previous generation, and for some the creation of a new generation. 'Settling down' after marriage, children, perhaps a house and certainly a permanent job feature in ideas of adulthood. As displayed in Figure 3, such adulthood began in 1960 around the age of 17, for most people with the end of formal education, full employment, and marriage in the early twenties, followed by children (BMFSFJ, 2006a, p. 265). This entailed a break in women's participation in paid employment until the age 33 approximately, when children were in school.

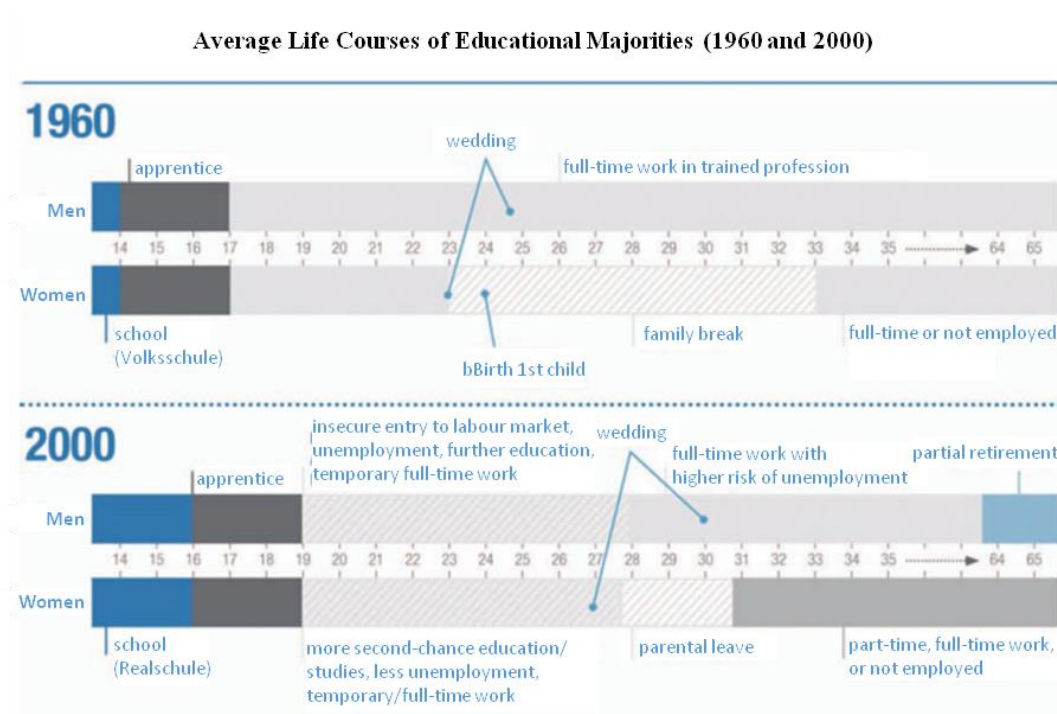


Figure 3 Standard Life-Courses, transl. from Gender Equality Report (BMFSFJ, 2011a, p. 44), compiled by Bird (2004)

Compared to this, youths in the year 2000 spent a longer time in basic education. A subsequent phase of life called “young adulthood” has emerged, which pushes ahead the so-called “rush-hour of life” (Bertram, 2012b; Bittman and Wajcman, 2000) (Figure 4). Young adulthood is a phase spent in higher education with loose personal commitments, whereas the rush-hour of life evolves between paid work and family obligations. Parenthood is the key transition event between those two phases. Discussing the rush-hour of life, Bujard & Panova (2014) differentiate between a *rush-hour of life decisions* and a *rush-hour of family cycles*. The former is predominantly relevant for professionals, and refers to a span of 5-7 years in which key decision about career and family occur at a rather high pace. The latter refers to the increased burden of caring for young children simultaneously to securing a livelihood. Only the former is ‘new’ as a phenomenon that has emerged since the 1960. The trigger for the rush-hour of life decisions, situated between ages 25-40, and particularly 27-35, is the lengthening of education time. This includes academic degrees, but also vocational master qualifications (Meister). Longer education periods result in an increasingly problematic coupling of social and biological age, in particular for females: the infamous ‘biological clock’, the window of fertility.

Increasing health risks for mother and child discourage motherhood past the mid-thirties, which is just the time when motherhood becomes socially most feasible for professionals.

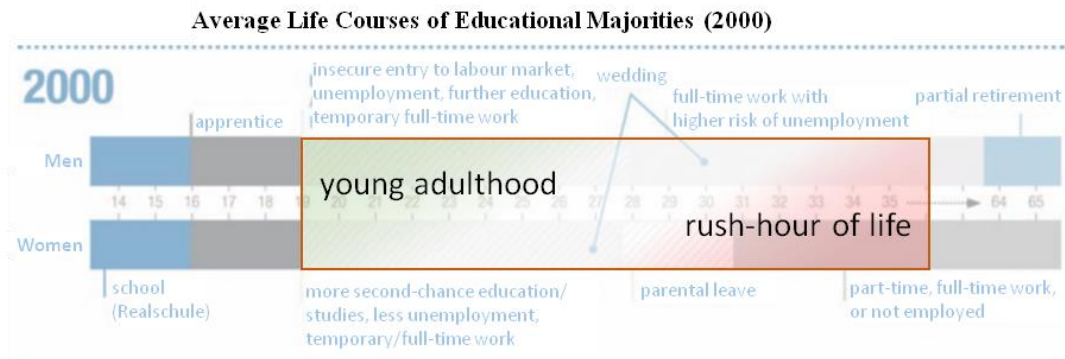


Figure 4 Young Adulthood – Rush-Hour of Life (adapted from BMFSFJ, 2011a)

The most under demographic scrutiny are hence not surprisingly female professionals, who were long presented as the group least willing to have children. This image has been challenged by the publication of recent census data, which tentatively suggests that fertility rates for female professionals have stabilised, perhaps even increased, whereas the rates for lesser educated women remain on the decrease (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2017c). It is arguably too early to tell, but the fact that parental leave reforms specifically targeted upper stratum women might explain this shift. At the same time it is still clearly the case that fewer female professionals (74%) have children than other females (80%)⁷. The causes for this general discrepancy have increasingly been understood not as choice per se, but as the result of an ever-repeated delay of parenthood in the life-course (Bittman and Wajcman, 2000; Bertram, 2012a). The combination of educational attainment of partners, where it is socially seen as less acceptable for women to marry and procreate with a man below their own educational level, is often considered as an important initial hurdle (educational homogeneity, Diabaté, 2018, p. 82). There are also indications that men place more importance on partnership in life, whereas women take a more critical stance. The phenomena are likely interrelated, and can be explained by women's anticipations of reconcilability problems in a society that in tendency still produces complementary and unequal gender relations (Diabaté,

⁷ Percentages are given for permanently childless women (age >45) in the year 2016.

2018, p. 93). The delay of parenthood to a time when partner and profession ‘finally fit’ then becomes a slippery slope into childlessness.

Another difference between the Fordist age and the last decades lies in the patterns of income over the life-course (Bertram, 2012b, p. 12) (Figure 5). Families in 1973, at the end of the Fordist period, had a comparable income in early and late adulthood, with a dip during the most ‘family-intensive’ middle age. The data for 2004 shows a general increase in income. However, income in early adulthood is significantly lower than in late adulthood. The cause is the spread of academic professions which exhibit career structures of increasing wages, opposed to the relatively more flat income progression of manufacturing work. The consequence is that the starting of a family falls into a time of perceived shortage, relative to the abundance of late adulthood. It has been questioned whether this distribution of income throughout the life-course is demographically optimal (Bertram, 2012b, p. 12).

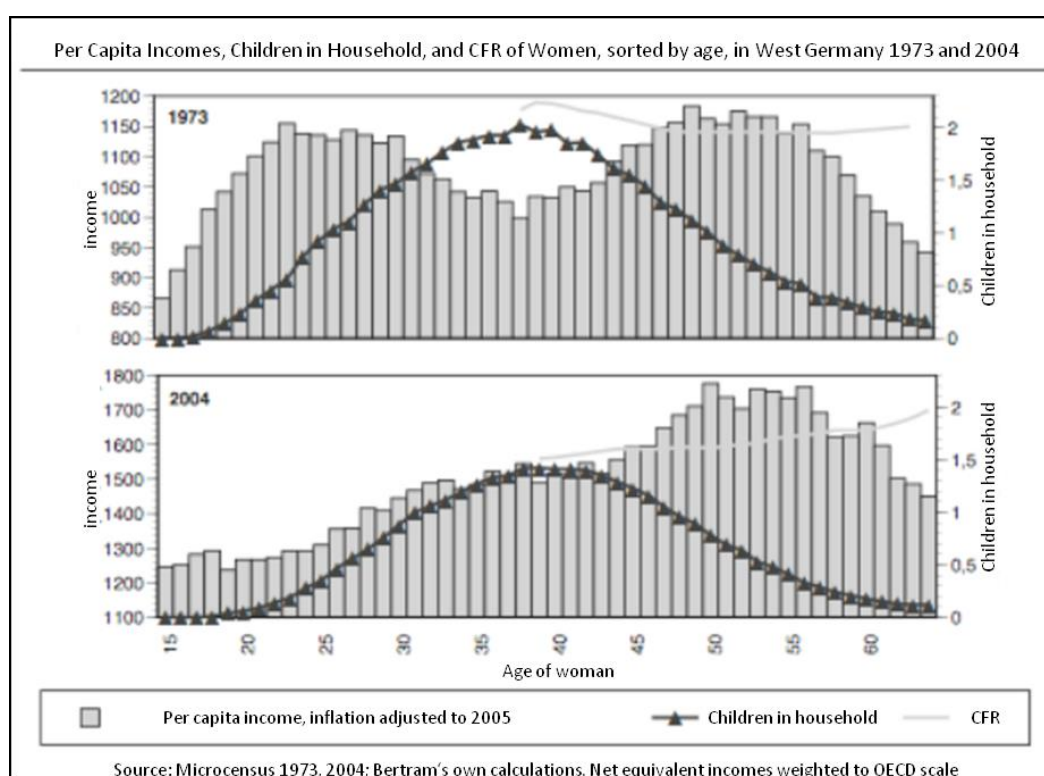


Figure 5 Income over Women's Life-Course (transl. from Bertram, 2012b, p. 12)

Applying taxation theory to life-course perspectives, Apps & Rees (2005) support these insights about the distribution of time and income over the life-course. It is

without doubt that children are the central cause for breaks and reductions in the labour market participation of women. Withdrawal from the labour market peaks for women at the age of 35–39 (Apps and Rees, 2005, p. 447). To explain why women withdraw from the labour market when having children, the authors point to the combination of various structural factors:

“More specifically, we would argue that factors such as the structure of the tax and social security systems, as they impact on working women of child-bearing age, the availability of good-quality and affordable child care, and organization of the school system, have an important effect on the terms of the trade-off between allocating time to the market and to domestic child care.” (Apps and Rees, 2005, p. 442)

Apps and Rees attribute the relative hardship during the rush-hour of life to two kinds of market failure that explain the sharp drop of labour market participation and hours worked for young mothers (2005, p. 459). The first market failure is to provide affordable childcare. The authors connect this to the taxation of childcare as a product, as well as the high taxation of the labour that goes into childcare as a main factor of production. This makes labour-intensive childcare expensive, and without public intervention so expensive that parents with smaller incomes are likely to substitute their own domestic labour. In other words, poor parents stay at home and care for children themselves, because the cost of childcare exceeds the wage they could earn. A given preference to stay home with children might lead to this decision even if the wage is similar to the cost of childcare, or even slightly higher. The second market failure is a limited access to credit for couples with pre-school age children (ibid). Free education for older children eases the monetary burden on parents, whereas early-age childcare must be paid for (see 5.3.2.1). This connects to the overall assertion, also made by Bertram as discussed above, that the distribution of economic means for the family is suboptimal throughout the life-course.

To summarise: Educational and economic changes can explain why the starting phase of family has moved back in the life-course, to be accommodated by more economic and personal stability. The structural creation of that phase of young adulthood is responsible for the delay of full adulthood, which, however, is hitting

biological age limits regarding fertility. That the number of intended children is not matched by the actual number of children in many families is likely connected to this temporal shift, in which the social organisation of life comes into conflict with the female biology of reproduction.

The increased longevity of people impacts life-course patterns further. Whereas women in early modernity barely survived to see their youngest children reach adulthood, women today in their fifties have on average another three decades ahead of them. Newer generations are likely to reach the age of 90, or even 100. There is thus now a new phase in the life of mothers, the 'empty nest'. Motherhood has thus stopped being a life-encompassing duty, and become a time-limited project. The question emerges how to fill 'late adulthood' with new purpose.

Whereas patterns of childhood and early adulthood have been converging between sexes throughout the last centuries (Frevert, 1989), parenthood still marks a divergence in which gender sets the sexes apart on different trajectories. It is at this junction and age that gender inequality becomes most noticeable and profound. It is worth adding that the experience of freedom during young adulthood might be formative for future expectations towards independence, gender equality and free time, which result in the experience of rather profound life-course breaks for young mothers (see 4.3.3). I will apply this perspective in my own analysis following section 4.2.1.

What has not been addressed in this Fordist-contemporary comparison of life-courses is the impact of concrete policies and other institutional factors. A little more historical context on policies and political debate in the upcoming section should give the reader a general overview over recent German family policy. A detailed discussion of *parental leave policies* and *public childcare* can be found in chapters 4.3.1 and 5.1 ff respectively. For these two policies I analyse in depth, presenting formal policy jointly with the analysis of the everyday enactment has the advantage of making it easier for the reader to connect these two perspectives.

1.4 German Family Politics: A Brief Orientation

The German government has taken an active approach to the management of family life in the last decade: firstly, in the labour market activation of mothers at an increasingly younger age of children, and secondly, in the expansion of childcare facilities. Childcare and parental leave reforms between 2004 and 2015 have enjoyed a rare popularity, responding to longstanding demands by childcare practitioners and parents. They received support from employers that made reforms politically viable, supposedly due to political rhetoric emphasising the economic benefits of sustainable fertility rates (Seeleib-Kaiser and Toivonen, 2011). The expansion of public childcare by SPD and CDU, particularly the right to childcare for under-three year olds in effect since 2013, presents the most obvious case of ‘paradigmatic’ change away from a conservative model (Fleckenstein, 2011; Seeleib-Kaiser, 2010). However, this expansion – while legally active – drags on in implementation and many assumptions made on the availability of public childcare fall apart in the face of reality. What is clear when looking at the opening hours of day-care facilities, usually between 7:00-16:30, is that full-time work for both parents remains difficult to coordinate. Furthermore, the expansion process is difficult for the municipalities to manage, and demand outpaces supply in urban areas with positive migration. This phenomenon has been coined ‘Kita-Mangel’ by the press (see 5.1). Somewhat less radical, but of central importance, are changes to parental leave: a tendential shortening of leave to one year, and a tendential rise of benefits by a shift from flat-rate to income-dependent payments. These two ‘big’ reforms, which I will discuss in detail in chapters 4 and 5, coincide with regulatory changes pertaining to alimentary payments after divorce and widows’ pensions, all of which follow the logic of working women as responsible individually for their economic security (adult-worker-model, Daly, 2011b).

Reforms are supposed to make work-family reconciliation easier and improve fertility rates. It may yet be too early to tell whether the implementation of reforms has shown signs of success in that second dimension, not in the least because childcare expansion is still much underway, but since 2012 the German statistical office reports a rising birth-rate. The average fertility rate of mothers with foreign

citizenship status of 1.9 children per women in 2015, in comparison to German citizenship mother's fertility rate of 1.4 in the same year (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2016), has been used by nationalist commentators to construct a fear of foreign population expansion in Germany, in particular of Turkish and Muslim minorities. Expression of it can be found in Thilo Sarrazin's bestseller "Deutschland schafft sich ab" (2010), or the rhetoric of the populist right party AfD. These fears have been connected to the sustainability of the welfare state in the face of migration. Turning away from this particular form of scapegoating, however, one can see more widely legitimate worries of people living in Germany about social and economic change affecting families.

Female labour market activation is not just a form of emancipation and modernisation, but often an economic necessity for families. Women, especially those returning to the labour market after a family break, are often depicted by media and employment agencies as a "Stille Reserve" (silent reserve), a previously unused economic resource. This view completely disqualifies unpaid work many citizens carry out, in charitable organisations and in the family, from public recognition, as Himmelweit lamented (1.2). It denies the time and reproduction problems that are likely to be caused by further activation of an already working population. It may, however, also point out that women hold a potential that is denied expression in current times, and that changes in the current modes of doing things – changes in policy – could be emancipatory, as Fraser suggested (1.1). This ambiguity of the consequences of activation is subject to substantial political debate and ideological cleavages in Germany, which I will discuss in the opposition of neo-familial and third-way childcare policies in section 5.3.3.1. The main conservative concern is the crowding out of the male-breadwinner-model and family time due to policies that incentivise women to maximise their participation in the labour market. Opposed to it, the liberal-feminist perspective claims that female labour market participation is essential to equal status for parents in society.

The opposition of two policies, *public childcare expansion* and *care allowance*, is highly symbolic for these ideological divisions: The care allowance (Betreuungsgeld) was a policy alternative to public childcare expansion proposed by the Christian

Social Union (CSU), Bavarian sister party of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), during the coalition with the Social Democrats (SPD), 2005–2009. While the policy was never pursued in that legislative period, it was reinforced as part of the coalition agreement between CDU, CSU and FDP in 2009 (CDU/CSU and FDP, 2009). It was passed in 2012 by the central government and abolished again in 2015, after the constitutional court declared that central government had overstepped its jurisdiction (public childcare is the responsibility of the Länder). Since then the *Betreuungsgeld* only exists in Bavaria (Landtag Bayern, 2016). The care allowance is a 150 € monthly payment to families who raise their small children at home, which is paid after parental benefit for up to 22 months. The policy was legitimised as facilitating a choice for families to give their young children into public childcare or finance a private solution to care (CDU, 2012). It was highly controversial for several reasons, often mocked as a “Herdprämie” (stove bonus) that pushed women into a ‘backward’ housewife role. It was also discussed whether the allowance would educationally disadvantage children of poor families, who would choose the money to supplement household expenses rather than invest it into their children’s wellbeing. The care allowance’s repeal on federal level shows the tentative dominance of third-way/liberal-feminist over conservative/neo-familialist ideas in the last decade of policy-making. At its heart, the conception of labour market participation as the central motor of social integration and reduced welfare dependence has been very influential in EU politics (Rubery, 2001). This has led to various forms of gender mainstreaming initiatives throughout the EU, which affected German politics. It has become almost taken for granted in liberal feminist circles that full-time employment is key to gender equality, because full-time employment is normalised as a precondition to career advancement. However, these values and norms have been challenged:

“The Women’s Movement challenged the feminine mystique – that full-time domesticity is the only path to women’s fulfillment – as a false myth. However, almost unawares another false myth – the career mystique touting men’s full-time paid work and continuous labor market attachment as the norm – came to be increasingly accepted by women, even when they couldn’t achieve it. Paid work became widely accepted as the path to women’s success and fulfillment as it purportedly was to men’s.” (Moen, 2011, p. 84)

For the historic bourgeois women’s movement in Germany, “emancipation was not to be confused with conformity to male standards”, the cold “pathology of the Modern” (Frevert, 1989, p. 127). The insight that the universalisation of ‘masculine’ career life-courses is problematic goes beyond aesthetics. As established above, care work is essential to societies. Viewed through the lens of the life-course perspective, Bertram suggests:

“... rules and regulations concerning the chronological organization of the life-course always rest on depictions and ideas from certain historical eras in which the majority of these life-courses were likely plausible. But a life-course whose structure essentially centers on education, career, and pension necessarily does not recognize any time for care, since it developed in parallel to the industrial-society model of the family. [...] The adherence to Bismarck’s ideas on life being used to organize the life-course necessarily leads to a situation whereby those who wish to interpret care for others as part of their lives in addition to their careers will always be at a structural disadvantage compared to those who do not see care as a part of their lives.”

(Bertram, 2012a, pp. 619–20)

He further posits that integrating care into modern life-courses is not so much a question of gender per se, but one of how to realise the “warm modern ideal” (Hochschild, 2003a, p. 213 ff) of family (Bertram, 2012a, pp. 618–20). To raise fertility, Bertram advises, policymakers should take into account the ideas young women have about their life-courses and motherhood, and make it more possible to realise those simultaneously; the decision to be a mother *and* to be a worker cannot be understood as an either-or (2009, p. 40). This requires a change of infrastructure such as full-day schooling and childcare. But it also requires economic stability for young families. Longer education periods that delay labour market

entry. Often entry-level employment is temporary, and offers insufficient stability to start a family, which moves parenthood even further back in life. The link between educational degree and labour market opportunities should be loosened, to increase mobility for workers to change jobs over the life-course, if industries or their personal circumstances change (Bertram, 2009, p. 52). Labour market policy needs to consider these issues as part of promoting a more family-friendly society. Taxation could be used to redistribute resources towards parents, and incentivise a more equal sharing of paid and unpaid work (Apps and Rees, 2005). But furthermore care involves intimate personal relations (attachment), which can only find expression when family members have time with each other (Vaupel and Kistowski, 2008). Time requirements for careers are still modelled on a masculine role that does not consider time for care. A reconciliation of care and paid work needs to change this expectation of traditional masculine lives: as it pertains to career structures, in the division of labour between home and workplace, and between sexes (Bertram, 2009, p. 46). To that end, tax splitting is counterproductive, and childcare fees should be abandoned to support young families economically (2009, p. 52). Bertram lauds the income-dependent parental benefit, because it allows parents – the main breadwinners in particular – to take time out of work (ibid).

Critically examining these suggestions in the face of the everyday my participants described, I will suggest that the current German set of policies has recommodified mothers, but not done enough to create care times for all parents, thereby espousing more of an ‘unencumbered adult-worker-model’.

1.5 Reflections on the Literature

Several literatures have been addressed above, which from different perspectives thematise issues of caregiving: first, conceptions of crisis in relation to social reproduction; second, issues of value of work and sustainable pricing; and third, welfare state restructuring and gendered life-courses. Changes in social relations, between women and men, and between states, markets, and families, were

presented as contingent outcomes of global economic deregulation, demographic change, and labour market restructuring. Economic growth and profits on a national scale justify policies that enhance international competitiveness. These produce in the current economic orthodoxy a commitment to austerity and public debt servicing, effectively setting fiscal limits for social policy. Wage polarisation effected by labour market deregulation has been accepted for the sake of competitiveness. In parallel, ageing populations and new risks emerging from atypical family and employment forms demand a greater coverage for social risks. These findings highlight the interconnectedness of social reproduction and commodity production, within states and beyond their borders.

It has been argued that the sustainability of social reproductive work, centrally care, suffers from insufficient recognition in the capitalist global economy. This is theorised as a structural incongruity between the desirable amount of care, including necessary resources and organisational preconditions, and the given mechanisms of resource distribution – the free market, the welfare state, and familial or community forms of provisioning. There is a crisis tendency inherent in the interconnectedness of social reproduction and commodity production, which is founded in the failure to develop a system of exchange that distributes resources effectively enough to avoid crises of misallocation. Capitalism regularly produces economical, ecological, and social crises. Following Sum & Jessop (2013, p. 186), economic imaginaries, such as Keynesianism or neo-liberalism, are successful only to the extent that they can offer a “spatio-temporal fix” that displaces or defers the effects of capitalism’s inherent contradictions. Where the institutions of the Fordist system are eroding, various commentators underline the need for new rationalities, private and public, about money and time allocation over the life-course and between members of society (Vaupel and Kistowski, 2008; Bertram, 2009). This necessitates reflecting the redistribution of time and work, and how identities are caught up in this dynamic of shifting divisions of labour.

Applied to the field of paid and unpaid childcare, contradictions become visible in a sense of undervaluation and underpayment of carers. Such a judgment is always contingent on localised and historicised perspectives of what is

‘sufficient’. In the current context of European welfare states, undervaluation is primarily expressed as the opportunity cost of care. Potential carers shy away from care in order to pursue more rewarding activities elsewhere. This schema applies to the wide conception that women have less children in order to work in paid employment. Especially for privileged women with high education and attractive employment opportunities, fertility has declined. At the same time unpaid domestic work, pertaining to housework more than to childcare, has been commodified and displaced from these privileged women to other women, often migrants. This returning ‘mistress and maid’ dynamic depends in its economic viability on sufficiently large wage differentials: the mistress needs to be able to afford the maid. These issues reflect in inquiries about the institutions structuring time-use patterns, and conflicts over valuations of these time-uses and mechanisms of segregation, reproducing advantaged and disadvantaged groups. The immediate concern in the German case is not absolute poverty, but equality and emancipation, understood as a closing of the gender pay gap, and gendered employment opportunities and hierarchies, within and across industries. In addition, however, this conception of gender equality also demands a cultural shift towards the recognition of men’s responsibilities in social reproduction, by employers, policy makers, academics, women and men themselves.

It was further criticised, however, that an exclusive understanding of care in terms of opportunity costs (chronos) detracts attention from the specific organisational requirements of care (kairos). These derive from the affective character of care relations, such as between parents and children. The separation of work and worker as in manufacturing, and therefore the replaceability of any worker with another of equivalent skills, is not as easily given in care. The quality of care benefits from durable interpersonal relationships. This points to the limits of commodification in this field of activity, suggesting further that instruments used to assess manufacturing performance are partially unsuited to care. An increased use of quality management tools in public childcare is one example where success indicators are deeply political and

contested. It is for this critique that the methodological approach taken in this dissertation will focus specifically on time constructs in human interaction, as outlined in the theoretical framework (chapter 2) below.

2 Refracting Time: A Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this dissertation is to better understand the social processes that create work-life reconciliation problems, illuminating how everyday practices are informed by structures such as policy mechanisms and cultural norms in the labour market and in public childcare provision. As outlined above, reconcilability issues have been theorised as instantiations of structural crisis tendencies between social reproduction and capital accumulation, as the outcomes of welfare state restructuring, and as a gendered division of paid and unpaid labour that disadvantages women.

The analysis will contribute insights towards these concerns raised in the literature, but it is not immediately oriented to them. Rather, it approaches the topic of reconcilability more inductively, and at the same time relocates the empirical scope of the inquiry away from processes of policy making towards processes of ‘policy taking’ in everyday-life. The site chosen for researching the everyday in this project was the city of Cologne in North-Rhine Westphalia, Germany, which I will describe in more detail in section 3.3 of the methodology chapter. Research questions emerged from the narratives of parents and childcare practitioners in in-depth interviews. Engaging with these accounts of local stakeholders directed attention to *time* as a key dimension in the coordination of their daily lives. As I will outline in section 4.1, the German discourse has constructed reconcilability predominantly in a *temporal* perspective. The most central contradictions experienced by parents are the *temporal norms* of childcare and workplaces regarding timing, schedules, and sequences: when to apply for childcare, how to reconcile the institutional schedules of childcare and work, and how to sequence education, work, and childcare in the life-course. I will extract from the data these temporal problematisations that stakeholders encountered when dealing with policy, institutions, and organisations in their everyday lives in chapters 4 and 5. The theoretical framework follows this profound discursive emphasis on time, instead of – for example – choosing an approach based around concepts of space.

Analysing how participants navigated their environment revealed certain barriers and resources, selectivities, and shared experiences and expectations. The following theoretical framework refracts the concept 'time' into a set of dimensions: a dialogical ontology of the social (2.1); and an account of agency based on a temporal deferral to subjectivation, suspended dialogically between experience and anticipation (2.2). Following a more general theoretical section on hegemony and governing (2.3.1), time is further conceptualised as an aspect of social order and the division of labour in terms of asynchronicity between spheres (2.3.2). Last, time is reflected in terms of alienation (2.3). In that order, I will progress from foundational assumptions to conceptualisations of the social that evolve around the individual subject, to overcome the shortfalls of individual explanations by bringing in the collective character of social relations.

I will introduce Bakhtin's and Voloshinov's dialogical conception of language, which lays the philosophical foundation to my subsequent methodological focus on experience and expectations in everyday life. Sum & Jessop's work on Cultural Political Economy (2013) is another central source, which itself engages Foucault's work on governing and Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Both inspired *Institutional Ethnography*, the sociological methodology developed by Dorothy E. Smith (2005), which provides central theoretical, but also crucial methodological tools, that enable a repositioning of the debate on social reproduction, the welfare state, and the division of labour into a discussion of everyday life and work. Furthermore her work picks up on the semiotic concerns of other theories discussed here by highlighting the growing importance of texts in the governance and execution of work (e.g. new public management). Refocussing the attention of policy analysis to the dynamics of everyday life also helps to prompt a critical reflection of the language of change employed in much welfare state theory: Hall's definition of a "paradigm shift" as a target change in policy is limiting where everyday life is characterised by ongoing contestation rather than hegemonic stability. At worst, seeking to understand change in a punctuated equilibrium between paradigms depoliticises struggle, especially outside of the formal political arena. Paying

attention to struggle outside of formal political processes also reflects the longstanding feminist concern that *the personal is political*.

2.1 Interpreting the Social

Foucault suggests that theory should begin with an evaluation of “conceptual needs” (1982, p. 209). A theory cannot be articulated without concepts, but likewise concepts tend to presuppose an ‘objectification’ (predefinition) of the research object that precedes any analytical work. In his lectures at the Collège de France, Foucault explains his historical method in terms of the questions to ask:

“... instead of deducing concrete phenomena from universals, or instead of starting with universals as an obligatory grid of intelligibility for certain concrete practices, I would like to start with these concrete practices and, as it were, pass these universals through the grid of these practices.” (Foucault, 2010, p. 3)

Foucault illustrates this method by asking “How can you write history if you do not accept a priori the existence of things?”, and answers by example: “Let’s suppose that madness does not exist. If we suppose that it does not exist, then what can history make of these different events and practices which are apparently organized around something that is supposed to be madness?” (2008, p. 3) I interpret this approach as a thought experiment that puts something ideational – an idea, such as ‘reconcilability’ (4.1) or ‘childcare deficit’ (5.1) – in question to show subsequently that its discursive existence is *necessary* to explain a historical trajectory, to make sense of an ensemble of practices that realise the idea in real time and space. Simultaneously, I perceive Foucault’s tactic as an attempt to minimise biases originating in a theory-driven reification of concepts/objects. Understanding language as a ‘semiotic grid’ used to divide a seamless reality into meaningful chunks entails on the one hand a sceptical element that denies the possibility of knowable absolute truth, and on the other hand a normatively critical element that inquires how language might be used to *prescribe* a ‘grid’ of reality as part of hegemonic projects. In my own work I am particularly interested in this prescriptive function, and how language is used to coordinate social relations around childcare.

The conventionality between concept and object, sign and referent, is a defining element in constructivist epistemology and critical semiotic/cultural theories that has extensive consequences for subsequent theorisations, the choice of methods and criteria for data selection. Finding the 'right' words to express fieldwork experiences, and how to handle translation, are issues in practice. I will address these consequences as two philosophical foundations of my work: critical realism and dialogical constructivism.

2.1.1 Critical Realism

Critical Realism has been developed along various lines, such as in the work of Archer, Bhaskar, or Sayer (Archer *et al.*, 1998). Shared ground amongst critical realists exists in the assumption of a realist ontology and relativist epistemology. This study will follow the interpretation given in Sum's & Jessop's *Cultural Political Economy* (2013). The authors develop their approach on the most fundamental assumption that the world in real time is too complex for human beings to make sense of its totality. This assumption supports a pluralistic science that studies the world from many different empirical and theoretical entry points. Critical realists distinguish between intransitive and transitive moments of scientific knowledge production:

"The intransitive moment refers to the external world as the object of observation and, in many cases, intervention; the transitive moment refers to the practices of science and scientific communities as a set (or sets) of observers and, perhaps, interveners." (Sum and Jessop, 2013, p. 6)

Knowledge is the *fallible* product that emerges between the transitive and intransitive moment. Therefore, critical realists perceive of science as an ongoing process, in which recursive reflection on both, the research object and the research practice, develop a spiral dynamic, a process and method called "retroduction" (Sum and Jessop, 2013, p. 9). The research questions formulated above and the theoretical framework presented below are outcomes of such a circular process between fieldwork experiences and academic reflection.

The key ontological assumption of complexity demands processes of simplification to help actors “go on in the world” (Sum and Jessop, 2013, p. 3 f). Sum & Jessop make a distinction between two sources of simplification: semiosis and structuration. *Semiosis* leads to the ongoing production of various construals⁸ by different actors or groups. These construals, sometimes pertaining to smaller and sometimes to broader issues, compete to become constructive. *Constructions* are those construals which achieve a degree of acceptance (*sedimentation*, see 2.2.1) that makes them structural, i.e. durably consequential in shaping human life. In their strongest form, constructions become *hegemonic*: taken for granted or ‘naturalised’ (Eagleton, 2007, p. 112). It is important to note that due to their consequentiality, constructions unlike construals are viewed as ‘real’⁹. Semiosis enters the approach in two forms, as sense-making and meaning-making (Sum and Jessop, 2013, p. 4 f). *Sense-making* refers to the process of apprehension of the human being towards their environment; it is a referential process in which context has important implications. *Meaning-making* denotes the production of linguistic meaning, communication and signification. The triad that emerges (in Saussurean terminology) between the symbol (signifier), the concept (signified), and the object (referent), is a necessary aspect of a Critical Realist perspective on semiosis¹⁰, which can be found in variations of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Jäger and Jäger, 2007), Begriffsgeschichte (Koselleck, 1982), Linguistic Ethnography, and Interactional Sociolinguistics (Blommaert and Rampton, 2011). I will explore some implications of this *ontological turn* to semiosis on the conception of ‘the social’ in the following section on Dialogical Constructivism. Taking for *real* the existence of constructions is part of what makes a realist ontology compatible with dialogical constructivism. What in turn makes a relativist epistemology compatible is the assumption that semiosis is a human technology to reduce complexity, and perhaps

⁸ Construal: “the way a person understands the world or a particular situation” (Cambridge Dictionary, no date)

⁹ Also see the Thomas Theorem: “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences.” (Thomas and Thomas, 1928, pp. 571–2)

¹⁰ These are distinct from approaches that understand meaning exclusively in the interrelation between signs, excluding references to objective reality, like the discourse theory of Laclau & Mouffe (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001). For a Critical Realist critique, see Sum & Jessop (2013, pp. 129–34)

also to cope with an inherent meaninglessness of the world and human existence (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 239).

As a second mode of reducing complexity *structuration* limits the number of possible social relations; it enforces *selection* among a limited number of alternatives (Sum and Jessop, 2013, p. 4). I suggest it also promotes *predictability* by limiting not only present, but also future relations. *Compossibility*, another key concept of Sum & Jessop, describes the compatibility and benign evolution of multiple relations between parts of a whole. As an example for compossible relations, Jessop cites the varieties of capitalism that coexisted within the European Union before the European Monetary Union (EMU) (Sum and Jessop, 2013, pp. 4–5). The EMU removed flexibilities between the member states, and according to Jessop made the EMU less able to reproduce a peaceful coexistence of member states within the European Union (ibid). Compossibility exists contingently in “specific time-space envelopes” (Jessop, 2005). I will address the spatiotemporal aspect of structuration in the upcoming section on Coordinating the Social, but I will call compossibility ‘reconcilability’ instead.

It is important to note that semiosis and structuration are not a binary. They do not correspond to the discursive-material binary. The latter is flawed, not in the least because discourse is material, such as in speaking bodies or texts, and ‘material’ aspects of life – such as the economy – are discursively organised between humans. Semiosis and structuration are two modes of simplification that can overlap, enhance each other, or possibly come into conflict. In the next section I will elaborate on semiosis and how meaningful interaction produces the social.

2.1.2 Dialogical Constructivism

The relegation of absolute truth to contingent meaning-making can be traced historically in the philosophy of positivist science, from Hume’s problem of induction, Popper’s falsification, and Kuhn’s paradigms (Rosenberg, 2005). But in discourse-sensitive constructivist approaches, contingent meaning-making becomes qualitatively much more important than the mere acknowledgement of positivist limitations. Here, society is understood as the dynamic product of *meaningful*

reality-constitutive interactional processes. In theories following this ontological turn to discourse, the social emerges in interaction, and this interaction is coordinated through past interactions and future anticipations of further interactions. This makes for a profound attack on empiricist/positivist methodologies in social sciences:

“The failure of the empiricist approach is its inability to incorporate an adequate account of the social actor's subjective understanding of the situation. By focusing on the observable dimensions of a social phenomenon, empiricists observe the social world from a different angle from that of their subjects. The empiricists' models, in short, tend to be constructed around the researcher's own implicit assumptions and value judgements about reality. They thus drift away from the social context by tacitly substituting their own view of the relevant aspects of the situation for the social actors' understanding of the social realities.” (Fischer, 2003, p. 51)

Rejecting that meaning is posited in objects, constructivist approaches need to explain how processes of semiosis take place and produce a variation of possible construals towards any event or object, but also how any ‘fixed’ language can be sustained. Contingency here refers to the initial ambiguity of sense-making, which can generate many construals and reactions in response to a phenomenon. Of these many possible construals, one is selected¹¹ in the course of action, giving ‘closure’, determining the phenomenon as some kind of thing (an event, an object, a process) (Parsons, 2010, p. 88). Contingency is a fundamental assumption of discourse theory, which describes the “conditions of possibility” of objects and identities (Howarth, 2004, p. 324), their precedents and context in a wider field of historical development that allow an object or identity to emerge. In that sense contingency replaces historical or material determinism by describing a phenomenon as overdetermined. In human interaction, contingency arises in the openness in which “utterances [do not] entail descriptive closure and cognitive consistency”, but are instead “intersubjectively understood” and result in “further actions” (Wetherell, 1998, p. 401). These points require elaboration:

¹¹ Selection is a key concept in the Structural-Relational Approach (SRA), in which change is understood as sequences of variation-selection-retention. (Jessop, 2005)

- First, there is the question of sense-making and meaning-making, of discerning a thing as a thing;
- Second, there is mention of an openness of utterances in human interaction that needs to be explicated;
- Third, there is the question of ‘going on’ in the social world.

Relevant to the first point, Lähteenmäki (2004) suggests that theories of *literal meaning* are part of an objectivist paradigm.

“the notion of literal meaning is intimately connected with the idea that, first, reality has a pregiven fixed structure, second, there is some ultimate way of making correct mental representations of the structure of reality, and third, there is a fixed correspondence between the objects of reality and the linguistic expressions which are used to refer either to the objects of reality or to their mental representations” (Lähteenmäki, 2004, p. 97)

While, as a realist, I agree that reality has a historically given structure, I also agree that a ‘correct’ representation is impossible. The search for context-free, literal meanings of signs presupposes a fixing between sign and referent that is theoretically and empirically not convincing: No one characteristic is ever shared by all instantiations of one specific sign (ibid). Consequently, analysts need to make a decision, privileging some characteristics over others as the core meaning of a sign, which undermines a disinterested definition¹². Foucault’s (2010, p. 3) strategy to “pass these universals through the grid of [...] practices” reflects this concern. Standpoint and ethnographic approaches (Harding, 2004b; Blommaert and Rampton, 2011) follow a similar logic. Dorothy Smith situates her starting point of research in everyday experience with an emphasis on language (see 2.2.2). Similarly, Lähteenmäki suggests an entry point into theorising meaning which starts with the spoken utterance in the actual social context. This approach to language is also attributed to the works of the Bakhtin Circle in 1920s St. Petersburg, an ensemble of scholars with various backgrounds and interests. Their commonalities and continuities are visible in:

¹² For an elaborated account, see Lähteenmäki (2004) pp. 94–5.

“the hostility to Saussurean linguistics; the insistence on the interactive nature of individual consciousnesses in a social world where language was a shared medium; the correlation of the stasis of meaning with authoritarian forces within language and change with popular resistance to that authority, and the continuity between forms of social consciousness and the significance of literary form.” (Bostad *et al.*, 2004)

This approach has come to be recognised as ‘dialogism’ albeit Bakhtin himself never used that term (Ongstad, 2004, p. 75). The following passage will address the theoretical basis of dialogism: the openness and interactive origin of meaning, addressing the second point identified above. Bakhtin developed a theory of culture that is based on the idea of dialogue and meaning as socially emergent, evolutionary and non-teleological, in which “moving beyond what is given” is the central dynamic (Bostad *et al.*, 2004, p. 2). This process of moving forward presupposes creative acts, espousing *emergent* properties, “properties that cannot be predicted from their constituent parts and antecedent conditions”, to use Lähteenmäki’s (2004, p. 100) definition. This contingent view implies uncertainty as a foundational source of human anxiety, which corresponds well with Sum & Jessop’s concern of reducing complexity, or as I have mentioned regarding structuration, increasing predictability. Bakhtin captures this emerging nature of language in the term *heteroglossia* (Bakhtin, 1981), understood as the outcome of a centrifugal tendency in the development of language, which is based in the decentral use and adaptation of language in everyday contexts. Opposed to this is a centripetal tendency in language development, in which the potential of understanding each other over distances and across contexts favours a more centralised standard language. Efforts of standardising language are associated with nation-building, the spread of dictionaries, standardised language teaching in schools, and similar projects that contain an ideological centralising momentum¹³.

As an underlying aspect of these political dimensions of discourse, a bit more should be said about how variation of language is limited. This also dispels the spectre of ‘anything goes’ relativism. Theories of interactional meaning-making posit a mediating function of signs between human beings, and between human and

¹³ Also see Gramsci

environment¹⁴. Voloshinov understood signs as symbolic tools, “reflect[ing] the functional dynamics of the social matrix that created them and deeply affect[ing] their creators in return” (Bostad *et al.*, 2004, p. 7). This social anchoring of meaning limits meaning potentials, but there is also a temporal aspect to limitations: Meaning emerges in concrete moments that make it possible to draw the connection between sign and referent synchronically. But meaning equally transcends the actual time-space of that concrete moment (utterance, event), because dialogical meaning-making is shaped by the rules of *antecedent use of signs*, and their *directedness to future* outcomes.

“... a theme must base itself in some kind of fixity of meaning; otherwise it loses its connection with what came before and what comes after – i.e., it altogether loses its significance.” (Voloshinov, 1973)

Dialogical theories see an unending chain of utterances and responses, leading back infinitely into the past and stretching into the future by anticipation. A present utterance includes a sedimented ‘trace’ which emerged in previous uses of a sign and anticipations in the sign’s use (Lachmann, 2004, p. 47). This ‘future towardness’ is captured in the notion of responsiveness, which characterises dialogical talk (Ongstad, 2004). Following Mead, and in line with this idea of responsiveness, Dorothy Smith views language as a way to organise and store (memorise) sensory experience and coordinate social interaction.

“Language, according to Mead, comes into being only as there is a conventional vocal gesture that activates in speaker and hearer the *same response or assembly of responses*. A vocal gesture or word activates responses stored from people’s experience; experience is thus organized socially.” (Smith, 2005, p. 80, italics added)

Shared meanings/responses are here seen as critical for dialogue to continue, that is, to act cooperatively. But not all talk (action) is dialogical (cooperative). Dialogue may be subverted, for instance in the style of carnival, when responses are withheld or made inappropriately, disrupting or breaking the chain of utterances (Lachmann, 2004, p. 50 ff). The ability to interact cooperatively, as I will conclude later with

¹⁴ This restates Sum & Jessop’s distinction between meaning-making and sense-making.

regard to reconcilability, depends on enabling conditions such as synchronised social schedules, which facilitate social inclusion into collective rhythms.

Pertinent to the third point identified above – the ‘going on’ in the social world – centripetal and centrifugal forces act on the relative instability-stability of meaning. This conception of discourse can be used to address political questions about the role of ideas, language, and hegemony. Mastering the (provisional) rules of communication within a community and across many contexts enables the actor to “go on in the same way” (Lähteenmäki, 2004, p. 102), to reproduce the culture/society. This mastering is a process of lifelong learning, where individuals in the community are corrected by their peers towards appropriate (linguistic) behaviour. Different life-courses result in individually varying cultural-linguistic capabilities, which depend on the social environment and individual development/aging (also see 2.2.4, Bourdieu on capital).

Discourse and linguistic analysts contribute the methodological tools to study the social construction in empirical interactional data. Synthetic efforts between Conversation Analysis (CA), post-structuralism and ethnomethodology have resulted in a wider interest in how to expand the empirical capabilities of CA to analysing the relation between institutions and long-term social processes with short-term interaction (Schegloff, 1997; Wetherell, 1998). Whereas these methods are often too focussed on micro-discourse analysis to be immediately useful to social analyses as conducted here, I utilise simplified CA symbols for transcription (p. 8). I further paid attention to pronoun changes and the construction of legitimacy (p. 140). Interactional sociolinguists and linguistic ethnographers have studied the enactment of identity in interaction, pointing to the multiplicity of identities a person can enact and the strategic positioning of such enactments (Blommaert and Rampton, 2011). These findings are useful to sensitise the social researcher more practically to the situatedness of discursive production, as mentioned above and further discussed in the methodology section on generalisability and interview data (3.1, 3.2). But dialogical constructivism has also influenced methodologies that are less focussed on micro-discourse, and more

interested in wider social coordination, such as Institutional Ethnography (Smith, 2005), which informs this dissertation and which I will elaborate on below.

To summarise, dialogical understandings of constructivism posit human interaction as the basic source of the production of meaning and culture. Semiosis is creative, but limited by social conventions, power relations, and extra-semiotic factors. Meaning carries a past legacy and future intent, that skilled speakers and hearers are aware of, and based on which they anticipate and create further responses. Thereby, meaning traverses time and space in an evolutionary, contingent, non-teleological way, being transformed event after event. Both centripetal and centrifugal forces work on the relative stability and standardisation of meaning. I will return to dialogism and the temporality in the discussion of *kairos* (2.2.3) and anticipation (2.2.4).

2.2 Shaping the Social

Moving on from the ontological and epistemological foundations, the next theoretical dimension to be addressed is structure-agency, and bound up in this dynamic, social change. As established above, language and semiosis are seen as technologies of social coordination, a perspective not only part of more recent 'discursive turns' in social science, but also fundamental to Marxist theories of ideology (Eagleton, 2007). This takes us, as a first step, into the terrain of subjectivity and agency as concepts pertaining to the individual.

Paul Smith (1988, p. 6) suggests that the poststructuralist critiques of the humanist individual created a theoretical impasse in Western philosophy. Whereas the negative, fragmented conception of the poststructural subject has become widely accepted, agency still tends to be thought of in terms of the humanist individual, understood as a "unified and coherent bearer of consciousness" and "intending and knowing manipulator of the object" (Smith, 1988, pp. xxx, xxviii). This leaves unresolved how to understand the "point of interaction between ideological pressures and subjective existence" (ibid, p.xxx). Paul Smith makes the central assertion that the difficulty to theorise the subject lies in the tradition of Western

philosophy itself, from Descartes to Sartre, which has repeatedly removed the subject from its actual living conditions into an abstract position:

“current conceptions of the “subject” have tended to produce a purely theoretical “subject,” removed almost entirely from the political and ethical realities in which human agents actually live [...] a different concept of the “subject” must be [...] discovered.” (Smith, 1988, p. xxix)

Subjectivity is an important category to interrogate in my research for two reasons: first, because I have grounded my starting point in participants’ narrated experiences, i.e. in their ‘subjective’ accounts. Hence it is important to clarify how their subjectivities help to understand the bigger picture of social reproduction and change in Cologne, Germany. Secondly, I raise the issue of subjectivity in terms of consciousness and self-esteem due to the guilty consciences carers reported to me. I will address this second aspect in terms of conflicting norms, rather than hegemony, in the current phase of transition between male-breadwinner and adult-worker-models (see 4.5). The following sections will discuss important sources on subjectivity, and integrate those into the dialogical framework introduced above. Starting with a critique of the work of Butler, and her conception of temporal indeterminacy (2.2.1), the argument moves to insights how ‘experience’ can be conceptualised as a mediating concept between subjectivity and agency (2.2.2). Returning to issues of timing and change, it interrogates agency in terms of ‘kairos’ (2.2.3). Finally, I integrate various insights about temporality in relation to agency together in a discussion of Bourdieu’s understanding of anticipation (2.2.4).

2.2.1 The Subject in Question

The problem of subjectivity that Smith outlines can be re-examined as a need to theorise subjectivity in a theoretical framework that evades the problematic aspects of at least three common approaches to social science: the methodological individualist and voluntarist aspects of rational choice theory, the essentialism of some standpoint theory and psychoanalysis, and the ‘linguistic determinism’ of poststructuralist scholarship. The latter, built on the work of Foucault, Derrida, or Althusser, tends to conceive of “subjectification as subjection”, theorising the subject as a discursive product of a “dialectic between freedom and constraint”

(McNay, 2003, p. 140). Excessive emphasis placed on discursive construction can encourage a quasi-determinism of the “always passive” (ibid) subject, interpellated by social norms (Althusser, 2001). I want to discuss in some detail here a critique McNay (1999, 2003, 2004) offers on the conceptual limits of Butler’s poststructuralist theory of power and identity. Butler’s contribution to feminist scholarship is seminal, and cannot be discussed here in its entirety. The dimension picked out for its particular relevance is her treatment of performativity as a *temporalised subjectification*, and therein her focus on language.

McNay lauds Butler for having brought feminism past the essentialist debate¹⁵ by historicising the symbolic through the concept of performativity. Butler understands identity as the effect of repetitions of acts that, through their ritualisation, can be attributed to relatively stable and recognisable categories (e.g. gender). This assumes a *sedimentation* of language around ritualised practices. Identity formation is constrained by external forces¹⁶ – subjection – leading in turn to an *internalisation of social norms* that enables the subject to draw on powers inherent in the subject position. This emerging agency of the subject is temporally delayed from the moment of subjection, constituting two distinct temporal modalities in which power affects the subject (Butler, 1997, p. 14). This conception expands from Foucault’s second volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1985), which raised the issue of morality and the conduct of the self, but left these ideas underdeveloped. McNay (1999, pp. 177–8) suggests that Butler builds on the strength of Foucault’s account, drawing attention to the historical specificity and variability of social norms. But she also perpetuates the weaknesses of Foucault’s account, chiefly a very abstract notion of subjectivity that oscillates between the poles of submission and autonomy.

¹⁵ Essentialist theory assumes an essence, or core of a person, exist independently from behaviour: she is a woman and that is why she acts feminine. This understanding, dominant historically, has been challenged by second-wave feminism. Poststructuralists oppose this separation of the self and practice as a naturalization of power relations. They reconceptualised identity as performative, interactional, or enacted: the human being acts in a feminine way which constitutes ‘her’ as a woman.

¹⁶ Including punitive measures, verbal harassment, etc., in response to ‘wrong’ behaviour

Butler grounds the “social temporality” (1988, p. 520) in the separation of language and conduct, assuming a central role of language in subjection. She reworks Austin’s speech act theory, emphasising delayed effects of speech acts, which integrates a dialogical understanding of language into her theory of temporality (McNay, 1999, p. 178 ff). The intention and context in the moment of utterance (speaking) cannot be sustained to the moment of reception (listening/response). This deferral enables *symbolic indeterminacy*. In consequence it becomes viable to theorise resistance as resignification, mediated by the context and intentionality of reception. Butler attributes these resignifying acts predominantly to marginal groups, who, finding their own desires frustrated by mainstream culture, resort to subversive tactics¹⁷. Thereby Butler expands the ways in which analyses of power can integrate the symbolic as a dimension of struggle. However, McNay identifies some important limitations:

“The idea of the performative provides a compelling account of the open temporality of structure that permits the emergence of autonomous action, but it does not really consider how this symbolic indeterminacy relates to other social structures and how it may catalyse or hinder change. [This results in a predominantly] negative model of action as the displacement of constraining social norms.” (McNay, 1999, p. 176)

Positing resignification as a radical emancipatory act discontinues the symbolic-social separation that is foundational to Butler’s anterior theory-building, and expands from the theory of symbolic indeterminacy a generalised concept of agency. According to her critics, Butler not only takes this generalisation too far, she also misses the need to theorise how different sources of power and agency, grounded for instance in the economy, interact with resignification. McNay suggests that Butler provides a theory of the possibility of resistance, rather than a substantive concept of agency: in the performative, “Agency is conceived of, in one-sided terms, as the indeterminacy of symbolic structures rather than as social practice. Agency is a quality of structures rather than subjects.” (2003, p. 143). This

¹⁷ The resignification by LGBT activists of the word ‘queer’ from a negative to a positive identification is an example.

leads to feminist theories using “a rather unqualified notion of temporal indeterminacy [of meaning systems] to explain agency in place of a more differentiated account of the *temporality of action*” (McNay, 2003, p. 140 ff, italics added). Furthermore, Butler’s account emphasises the past in the role of subject formation (sedimentation, ritual) at the expense of the future, and a notion of anticipation (McNay, 2003). An important insight of poststructuralist accounts of the subject nevertheless reminds us that ‘freedom’ from subjection is – if at all – only achievable as exclusion from society, as the relinquishing of all power that comes from having a place in society, as being ‘someone’. This negative freedom appears rather undesirable and cannot be the target of emancipatory movements. Emancipation, in positive terms, needs to be about the distribution of means and recognition within society, about inclusion, and about a balancing of power in individual and collective relations.

2.2.2 Agency and Experience

McNay (2003, p. 141) suggests that a “valorization of experience” can partially overcome the limitations in Butler’s work through an emphasis on anticipation, and the social experience of time. In the following paragraphs I will address the concept of *experience* in the work of Edward P. Thompson, Joan Scott, and Dorothy Smith, tracing how experience can act as a mediating concept between subjectivity, agency, and structural social relations.

On the question how experience relates to agency, Thompson (1966) suggests that objective social relations give rise to similar experiences amongst the people affected by them. These relations can be indirect. For example, he suggests, workers are in a direct relation to their employer, but workers themselves as a class do not intrinsically relate to each other. Institutions of the working class, such as unions or newspapers, come into being only through a process of class formation that begins in shared economic conditions, which give rise to shared experiences, which in turn enable a mobilisation around an emerging, shared subjectivity. His account is mainly targeted against structural Marxist accounts, which treat class as

a given economic category without inquiring into how class situations can lead to class consciousness and collective action.

Thompson's work is not without its critics and Wood (1982) reviews some of the charges raised against him: his conception of experience appears to some as voluntaristic, his insistence on the cultural process of class formation as ignorant of the economic determinants of class. In part the conflict appears to revolve around the interpretation of 'class', and whether as a concept class should exceed 'the relations of production' (Wood, 1982, p. 50). Thompson challenges accounts that equate capitalism with technological industrialisation, pointing out a mobilisation around exploitative social relations that predates industry, and is variegated across different social groups at the lower end of the stratum (ibid, p. 57). Thereby he demands an empirical effort to go beyond theoretical ideas about class and to examine the concrete historical social relations. To study experience entails "to explore what these 'structures' do to people's lives, how they do it, and what people do about it" (Wood, 1982, p. 62). The latter refers to the political practices that can eventually emerge from shared experiences.

This focus on political practice and experience is shared by standpoint feminists, and has been a central line of critique against them, for example by Scott (1991). Whereas she recognises his contributions to conceptualising agency, Scott criticises both Thompson and feminists following his ideas, charging them with an "essentializing" of class or gender as an overarching and dominant determinant of consciousness (1991, p. 787). Her claim has important implications of the limits of generalisability and unity of group identities, such as widely discussed in the critiques of standpoint feminism's alleged totalisation of the term 'woman' (Crenshaw, 1989). While this does not negate that social relations bring forth identities, it must be clear that individuals identify with several categories, and that each intersectional combination of dimensions (class, gender, race, etc.) in different spaces and times takes on its own political dynamic. This in tendency undermines a feminist political union of women from different backgrounds, simply because the social relations they find themselves in vary and contain exploitative relations between women, such as between the 'mistress and the maid' (Young, 2001).

Scott furthermore points out that historical processes of subjectivity formation are discursively mediated. The epistemological issue that Scott provides a statement to is whether language and experience can be separated, or if experience needs to be treated as inherently discursive. She clearly advocates that all experience is discursive, and that because discourse is collective, experience is collective (Scott, 1991, p. 793). Hereby Scott diverges from Thompson's explanation that shared experience is grounded in shared objective social relations. The problem, as suggested already by McNay above, is that Scott's concept of agency becomes very thin. This is because she posits discourse as the source of subjection, and subjectivity as causal for action. While Scott views the coexistence of various discourses, and the friction between them, as a source for change, she does not offer an account by which ability agents can select one discourse over the other. There is no point of traction outside of discourse that generates change. Agency offers no conceptual substance past an acknowledgement of enactment of subjectivity. Contextually, it is important to note that Scott's paper is addressed as a critique to historians' practice of taking their own and their sources' experience at face value. Given the necessarily narrative accounts of experience that history deals with (as all research), it should be considered that whereas one may – as I do – disagree with her equation of experience with discourse in general, the consequences she draws are nevertheless relevant for the linguistic nature of experiential data. It is worth acknowledging how these insights point to limitations, but also strengths in research methods such as Foucault's genealogy that seek to historicise experience and discover the power relations that make up the (discursive) politics of identity and group consciousness. Therein, "experience is [...] that which we want to explain" (Scott, 1991, p. 797).

Dorothy Smith has attacked feminist poststructuralism, such as that of Scott and Butler, for the exclusion of experience as a viable source of agency:

“Feminist postmodernism/poststructuralism has, of course, repudiated experience as a ground to speak from since its constitutive conventions deny the possibility of speech that is more than a movement within or an expression of a discursive logic, and *of the existence of a subject outside or beyond discourse.*” (Smith, 2009, p. 2, italics added)

Poststructuralists, in the extreme, assume that subjectivity is a product of discourses entirely – hence reported experience has no critical potential, it just replicates the discourse. Smith, alongside other standpoint feminists, is sharply opposed. She views such poststructuralist accounts of the subject as part of the “relations of ruling”, textually-mediated, translocal modes of social organisation that move “knowledge, judgment, and will” away from local producers to central organisations (Smith, 1996, p. 175). These create an “out-of-body experience”, metaphorically speaking, that positions subjects outside of their bodily situatedness into a translocal, virtual reality, such as for instance scientific discourse, or the market economy¹⁸ (Smith, 2009). Excluding local bodily experience as a source of critique leaves poststructuralism defenceless to address these organisational forms of objectivation and local disempowerment. This dissertation, in fact, uses Smith’s approach to do exactly that for childcare in Cologne.

By valorising experience as social *and* individual, that is socially produced and individually lived through, Dorothy Smith comes closer to bridging the gap that Paul Smith identified between ‘ideological pressures’ and the ‘existing subject’. As noted above, standpoint feminist approaches grounded in experience have been criticised for privileging (women’s) experience as an authentic source of knowledge, ignoring that all experience itself emerges from discourse, as poststructuralist or postmodernist theory assumes. As such they have been charged with essentialism and relativism¹⁹. Smith responds to this critique by stating that whereas standpoint feminism uses experience as an entry point for analysis, it does not treat individual accounts as sufficient or ideal data. Instead it searches for the commonalities in experience that can be explained by a shared social situation, and “studies up”

¹⁸ The conditions of existence in market societies shift away from interpersonal dependence to organisational ‘abstract’ dependence (Marx, 1973, p. 101)

¹⁹ See Harding (2004a) for an overview

(Harding, 2004a, p. 30) into the institutions and discourses that shape these situations, and thereby create shared experience²⁰. This also distinguishes standpoint approaches from locally-bounded ethnographic research, which does not necessarily explore the translocal and trans-contextual dimensions of analysis (ibid). Experience and everyday use of language may further be redeemed as an object of analysis because of their political relevance. Rejecting, for example, the literal meaning of 'woman' as anything that could truthfully and universally describe feminine or female human experience, does not disqualify that the sign 'woman' functioned as a unifying node of discussion and action for the white, middle-class Western women's movement. This worked – within limits – according to Dorothy E. Smith, because the issues female activists discussed centred on the sexed body they shared:

“In exploring our experiences we talked with, wrote to and for, women, beginning with what we shared as women, our sexed bodies. Here was and is the site of women's oppression, whether through violence, rape, lack of control over our choices to have children, and, through our connectedness to our children through childbirth and suckling, the drudge of housework. To declare this is not to formulate essentialism or biological determinism. Women's experience of oppression, whatever its form and focus, was grounded in male control, use, domination of our bodies. No transcendence for us. We were irremediably (as it seemed) defined by our bodies' relevance for and uses to men.” (Smith, 2009, p. 8)

The relevance of this experience cannot be found in the revelation of universals, but in its historical consequentiality as consciousness-raising in the formation of political activism, as Gramsci (1999) already established in his work on organic intellectuals. The link established here is not between discourse and subject, but between discourse and agent. Discourse is not a realm separate to the social or material world, but functions as a mechanism of interpersonal communication and coordination within it.

Institutional Ethnography (IE) is a feminist sociology pioneered by Dorothy E. Smith. The analytical target of IE is “explication rather than theory building; the analysis is

²⁰ See methodology chapter on generalisability (3.1)

meant to be 'usable' in the way that a map can be used to find one's way" (DeVault, 2006, p. 294). Smith's intention to write a sociology "*for people*" that connects to lived experience, however, does not promote a sociology that exclusively builds on phenomenological experience (2005, p. 1). It takes people's local experience as an entry point from which research must go further to understand the social mechanisms which created the experience to begin with. Although this research project primarily relies on interviews and does not include participant observation, it cannot be considered an ethnographic study. It is however inspired by IE's underlying logic.

"Standpoint as the design of a subject position in institutional ethnography creates a point of entry into discovering the social that does not subordinate the knowing subject to objectified forms of knowledge of society or political economy. It is a method of inquiry that works from the actualities of people's everyday lives and experience to discover the social as it extends beyond experience. [...] The institutional ethnographer works from the social in people's experience to discover its presence and organization in their lives and to explicate or map that organization beyond the local of the everyday." (Smith, 2005, pp. 10–1)

Experience becomes framed here as a concept to mediate between subject positions and social structures, including a dimension of agency or 'making of a subject position'. In that sense Smith continues Thompson's grounding of experience in social relations, while acknowledging Scott's qualification that experience is an effect of subjectivity. Smith shares with Thompson, building on Marx, the fundamental idea that individual social activities are grounded in material conditions, and that history and society are the forms of cooperation that these activities take. It is therefore that these social relations should be the object of inquiry (Smith, 2004, 2005, p. 57). In order to do so adequately, concepts need to correspond to the historically specific social relations, rather than a parsimonious, ahistorical canon of sociology. Only then can the retroductive (critical realist), dialogic methodology unfold.

In order to take account of the acts of individuals without falling into voluntarism or material determinism, IE theorises *the social* in "how people's activities or practices

are *coordinated*” (Smith, 2005, p. 59). In this pursuit, IE problematises the reproduction of dominant culture. This includes the production of legitimacy and authority, and how actors can draw on their subject positions in order to channel this authority in local contexts. Different pasts, presents, and anticipated futures, unique to each individual, allow for differences in interpretation and response. But differences between groups are also coordinated more systematically: through symbolic interaction as explored by Mead or in conversation analysis; in the relations of commodity production, as analysed by Marx; or through textually-mediated processes, as Weber discussed in his work on bureaucracy. But the dynamics of (re-)distribution and recognition are always interlinked in the real world (Young, 1997), language is the medium “*par excellence*” for social coordination (Smith, 2005, p. 76).

Drawing on Luria’s work on child and language development, Smith suggests that language creates attention to similarities, functioning as a *verbal generalisation system*²¹ (Smith, 2005, p. 83 ff). This allows children to learn to equate the word ‘stick’ with all sticks (assimilating all the different things that can be subsumed under the term ‘stick’), or rarefy the meaning of an object to its most important characteristic (the table is for ‘eating at’, other properties or potential uses, such as ‘standing on’, are excluded). Hence, meaning and corresponding ‘appropriate’ behaviour is prescribed in everyday language learning and use. This includes identity terms, and behaviours that become associated with it, such as gender or class, which children internalise and imitate from a very early age. An example for authority is the expertise of ECEC practitioners in child development assessment (see 5.4.2).

In summary, it should be highlighted again that Dorothy Smith, not unlike Paul Smith, assumes an agent who exceeds subjectivity. This is supported by a theorising of a multiplicity of subject positions each agent traverses, a position partially shared by poststructural theory. However, standpoint theorists see further opportunities for the ‘excess’ of agency over subjectivity. They posit a human capability to make

²¹ Compatible with Sum & Jessop’s conception of semiosis as a simplification system.

sense out of the environment (such as the relations of production) that exceeds discourse in the sense that sense-making is a generative mechanism for meaning-making, a creative process that mediates between substantive reality and language. The advantage of such an ontological assumption is that it is more capable of explaining how language and new subject positions are made in the first place. It is thus better positioned to explain change. This is relevant since my study is situated in a period of transition between gender models in which new subject positions (adult-worker) have gained a dominant, but not hegemonic position. In the analysis of interviews, the above perspective helps me to situate interview data as enactment of subjectivities. Therein, the recounted struggle between subject positions (e.g. gender identities) is a key feature of reconcilability problems. But recounted strategies also point to agential potentials or barriers that arise for certain actors at certain junctions. I analyse such 'key events', e.g. births, promotions, and parental leave taking, in chapter 4.

2.2.3 Agency and Kairos: The Right Time for Change

Towards a theory of *timing* relevant to these 'key events', I would like to introduce a conceptualisation of agency supplied by Herndl & Licona (2007). The authors seek to shape a notion of agency that, analogous to Foucauldian power (p. 88), targets the *how-questions* of social change. The problem posed by the authors is how to conceive of rhetorical agency, defined as something that *effects change*, within constraints of authoritative discourse. This perspective interrogates how the centripetal and centrifugal forces of language identified by Bakhtin work on subjects in specific contexts. Significantly, it delimits the concept of agency to a situation of change, rather than a general capacity to act.

Agency, for Herndl & Licona, is thought to exist "at the intersection of a network of semiotic, material, and, yes, intentional elements and relational practices", as a social location and opportunity that agents traverse, rather than a quality to be possessed (2007, p. 137). It is a "coming together of subjectivity and the potential for action" (Hedge 1998, in Herndl and Licona, 2007, p. 138). This *conjunctural*

understanding is not unique. What Herndl & Licona add to this is the temporality of agency expressed in the concept *kairos*.

Chronos and kairos, as introduced above, connote two distinct ideas: chronos refers to the quantitative character of time, its divisible, measurable durations and irreversible, continuous flow; kairos refers to a qualitative aspect: the timing of a discrete event in history, the “when” in an order of events (Smith, 1969). It is translated as the ‘right time’, an opportunity given by the constellation of events. Kairos thus refers to a critical or turning-point in history, a situation of crisis, the fork in the road (ibid). Instead of conceptualising agency as the general capability to act, Herndl & Licona limit the concept to this specific – kairotic – moment. Agency is understood as “social subjects realizing the possibilities for action presented by the conjuncture of a network of social relations” (2007, p. 135)²². Implicit therein is the assumption “that postmodern subjects [...] exist *before* or outside the agentive or authoritative performances, outside the shifting social location of agency and authority” (Herndl and Licona, 2007, p. 13, italics added). Whereas subjects pre-exist, it is “the social phenomenon of agency [that] brings the agent into being” (Herndl and Licona, 2007, p. 140), giving primacy to the conjuncture rather than the actor. This reattributes the conditions for change to a spatiotemporal match between circumstances and subjectivity. Following Paul Smith, Herndl & Licona suggest that the human agent exceeds the subject. This ‘excess’, however, cannot be located within the individual, but becomes temporarily available to the subject due to the enabling circumstances of kairos.

Their approach makes progress in going beyond a simple agency-structure/freedom-constraint binary: it locates agency in the enactment of transformations in critical events, whose possibility is given by the conjuncture of enabling conditions. This reconfiguration of the agency concept has the advantage of separating the notion of agency from the notion of the individual. Another advantage is that kairotic moments can easily accommodate a multitude of actors working together or against each other. An example would be the interaction

²² Herndl & Licona draw on Bourdieu’s understanding of habitus, and how changing social conditions create differential potentials for action.

between fathers and their bosses in leave-taking negotiations, and how these events shape lives and understandings of acceptable masculinities (4.3.3.3). Instead of pitching individuals against structures, then, agency points to a time-space of contingency in which structures can be transformed through subjective intent. I suggest that this aspect of conjuncture highlighted by Herndl & Licona is crucial in understanding how temporality enters into the agency-structure debate. However, theorising empowering elements in conjunctures appears more of a theory of structures, or indeed, a theory of the possibility of agency, as McNay (2003) has already pointed out as a weakness of poststructuralism. The critique regarding the abstractness of theories of agency, and the lack of embedding in actual lives and events, has been partially countered here through the notion of *kairos*, placing the situated event/conjuncture into the centre of analysis, as I will do in chapter 4. The concept however, deprived of empirical application, remains uncomfortably abstract. For a holistic account, more needs to be said about how agents seize kairotic moments. I will do so by connecting *experience* and *kairos* with Bourdieu's theory of *habitus*.

2.2.4 Agency as Anticipation

Both McNay and Herndl & Licona point to Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* to make sense of subject formation. Bourdieu & Wacquant's definition captures in many ways what has previously been discussed as experience, oriented to the past. The definition by McNay, respectively, adds a future-oriented dimension. Together these combine to enable a fully dialogical framework.

"... habitus consists of a set of historical relations 'deposited within individual bodies in the form of mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation, and action.'" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992)

"*Habitus*, or the construction of the body within cultural norms, is understood not simply in unidirectional terms of the body's retention of exogenously imposed norms, but also in terms of the anticipatory dimension of protention, or the living through of those norms." (McNay, 2003, p. 143)

Bourdieu's habitus is described as a "strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 22). It is

creative and adaptive, but within the limits of structure (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). This non-determinism has been theorised from two entry points: firstly, in Bourdieu's treatment of *individuality*, which he perceives as a *social trajectory* in which "the habitus could be considered as a subjective but not individual system of internalized structures" that is the product of a different chronology of experiences (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 86). Early experiences, Bourdieu suggests, are most important, building the foundations against which all later experiences are understood.²³ Consequently, individual styles are structural variations of a group habitus that emerge from different sequences of events between individual lives – individual paths of integration into a common social positions (such as class).

Secondly, to theorise structural limitations, one needs to examine more closely what has previously been called constraint, authority or structure. Structures are not only – or necessarily – constraining. Whereas, for example, authority selects some discourses over others, and hence excludes, it also empowers the selected. Structures are thus in part a product of their own reproductive functions, which explains conservative biases. But they are also porous to transformative action that is generated within and outside of them. Following Bourdieu's theory, structure does not cover humankind in a total manner, but exists as specific fields.

"A field consists of a set of objective, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power (or capital) [...] each field prescribes its particular values and possesses its own regulative principles." (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992)

Understood this way, field is potentially synonymous with institution or discipline. The metaphor of *battlefield* has the advantage of ambiguity: it is the status quo of history, an objective configuration of resources (capital) in space, a landscape of hierarchical positions (the higher and lower ground). Yet at the same time it is the space of struggle, where the future is decided (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

A central aspect to Bourdieu's work is the assertion that social and cognitive structures are generatively linked, which is why an analysis of culture (or discourse) is effectively a political analysis, revealing relations of symbolic power (Bourdieu

²³ This perspective also informs discourses emphasising the importance of ECEC.

and Wacquant, 1992). This idea restates in a different context previous perspectives that meaning emerges in the interaction between human and environment (sense-making). Symbolic power enters into the anticipations of social agents, their subjective expectations of future possibilities. In Bourdieu's (1977, p. 77) words:

“... practical evaluation of the likelihood of the success of a given action in a given situation brings into play a whole body of wisdom, sayings, commonplaces, ethical precepts (‘that’s not for the likes of us’) and, at a deeper level, the unconscious principles of the ethos which, being the product of a learning process dominated by a determinate type of objective regularities, determines ‘reasonable’ and ‘unreasonable’ conduct for every agent subjected to those regularities.”

The tendency for the subject to *anticipate a future based on past experience* can explain stability tendencies. A challenge to explain social change emerges practically and epistemologically: the categories in use in everyday life are generated by the social relations underlying them. Methodologically, this necessitates a “double reading” in scientific practice that addresses both objective-material and semiotic levels of social relations (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 11), which I see mirrored in Sum & Jessop’s approach, as well as in Smith’s “studying up”. As suggested by McNay (2003, p. 141), in this effort “an interpretative analysis of experience must always be resituated within the overarching problematic of power relations”, in which a “hermeneutic interpretation of time is crucial in revealing the role played by anticipation within practice and agency”.

Bourdieu integrates a theory of experience with a dialogical theory of agency, pointing to the centrality of anticipation as something grounded in the past and shaping present action directed at the future. To emphasise again a key point Herndl & Licona take from Bourdieu: Separating the theory of subject formation from the theory of agency makes it possible to consider the historical trajectory of an individual and the history of subject formation (collective categories, such as class, gender) separately from the structural conjuncture (kairotic moment) in one specific moment. This is not meant to suggest that the history subject and individual capability to affect kairotic moments (events) are separable – rather the opposite – but it emphasises a degree of (temporal) independence between the historical

subject and the present agent, pointing towards the innovative and reflective capabilities of the subject to adapt to a present event or anticipated opportunity. Authority and other forms of constraint, then, can be considered as resources or barriers to this adaptation process. In the case study below, for example, the availability of public childcare will be discussed as an enabling condition for mothers' labour market participation.

In continuation of the discussion on Bourdieu's work on the habitus, I would like to introduce more of his work on uncertainty, the experience of time, and the connection between time and power. Bourdieu (1990, pp. 98–99) suggests that the introduction of uncertainty into sociological theory is crucial, because it dispels any simple notion of the rational actor or structural behaviour. Taking seriously the uncertainty encountered in daily life necessitates theorising how actors respond to uncertainty, and how uncertainty undermines any rational action, if rationality is understood as an informed comparison of alternative outcomes and the selection of the best. Bourdieu proposes that actors faced with uncertainty undertake activities to reduce this uncertainty, in order to make the world "liveable", practically "foreseeable" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 215). This resonates with Sum & Jessop's idea of complexity reduction as a necessity to 'go on' in social life. More importantly, to "reintroduce uncertainty is to reintroduce time" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 99). The irreversibility of time not only introduces risk, time as social experience also raises attention to the plurality of social times and power that resides in the control over such social temporalities.

The experience of time is grounded in the matching between *subjective expectations* and *objective opportunities*. Time becomes perceptible in experiences of impatience, regret, nostalgia, boredom, or stress, when expectations and realities clash (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 208). This theorisation derives from Bourdieu's work on the relation between the habitus and field, in which he posits that the internalisation of past experiences produces dispositions that are adjusted to the social opportunity structure. Thereby he suggests that the opportunities given through capital endowment shape individual consciousness and motivations, the "investment" in the social game (ibid, p.213).

“Thus, the experience of time is engendered in the relationship between habitus and the social world, between the dispositions to be and to do and the regularities of a natural and social cosmos (a field). It arises, more precisely, in the relationship between the practical expectations or hopes which are constitutive of an *illusio* as investment in a social game, and the tendencies immanent to this game, the probabilities of fulfilment that they offer to these expectations.” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 208)

Investment presupposes ‘things to do’, a social role or life’s purpose, that integrates the individual into the *social temporal order* with all its regularities. For the individual, this allows an anticipation of the future, a forthcoming of the present in the form of future obligations or opportunities. This enables a strategic orientation to this future, an ability to ‘make’ time, to “temporalize oneself” (ibid, pp. 207–13). The diversity of ways to temporalise oneself, bounded by unequal capital endowments, creates a plurality of social times. Bourdieu suggests that powerlessness prevents investments in the social game, producing detachment, where the “link between present and future is broken” (Bourdieu, 2000, pp. 221–2). In his description of the Algerian subproletariat he refers to fantastic expectations and perceptions of life as a gamble, which he attributes to a fatalism bred from powerlessness. Respectively, the time of the executive, keenly invested and experienced as a permanent hurry, becomes a “fundamental dimension of the social value of that person” (ibid, p. 226).

Bourdieu emphasises that timing is a type of power in itself. He locates this power in the ability to make somebody else wait, to wait oneself, or to speed up the pace of an interaction. Deferring an act, or acting to surprise others, requires control over timing. Its effect lies in the capability to make oneself unpredictable, exposing others to the anxiety of not being able to anticipate the course of future interaction (Bourdieu, 2000, pp. 227–8). This secures the initiative for the person in control and puts others at a strategic disadvantage. Bourdieu also indicates how power over distribution is temporal. Timing determines distributive practices as stable or arbitrary, setting the pace of economic relations. Following this insight, *flexibilisation* must be seen not only as a technology to efficiency maximisation, but

centrally as a *disempowerment* of those who are exposed to temporal insecurity, those or are, in Bourdieu's words, "condemned to live in a time oriented by others, an *alienated* time" (ibid, p. 237, emphasis added). With regard to Europe in the 21st century, Bourdieu (2000) remarks that trends towards flexibilisation and precariatization lead to increased, more widespread risks for a mismatch between objective opportunities and subjective expectations, especially for the younger generations. Socially determined criteria, such as stable employment and property, help to make sense of a "signposted universe" of inclusions and exclusions, which regulate the predictability of social trajectories (ibid, p. 225). This holds on the individual level for the expectable life-course, and on the collective level for the orientation of political projects. I will return to this as the key finding I perceive in the current dynamic of professional parents, who experience time conflicts as part of gendered identity conflicts in a period of flexibilisation of family models and labour market temporalities.

A profound consequence of uncertainty about the future is uncertainty about identity (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 237). Bourdieu understands identity in terms of an ability to make sense of oneself and one's life. And whereas he observes a relative autonomy of the symbolic, and perceives therein a subversive potential not unlike the symbolic indeterminacy identified by Butler, Bourdieu reminds us that any breaking of the social rules is perceived and judged by society (ibid). That judgment can mark subversive acts as either transgression or liberation, the latter which is thereby legitimated. This legitimation of the individual subversive act, however, requires that the norms underlying social judgment are already weakened. Most profoundly, the social world can bestow unto the individual "that which they most totally lack: a justification for existing", a "right to *feel justified in existing as he or she exists*" (Bourdieu, 2000, pp. 237, 239, italics in original). This social importance – purpose, *raison d'être*, identity – is therefore utterly dependent on the recognition that underlies social inclusion. A contemporary example where this recognition is withdrawn is the role of the housewife.

Bourdieu further asserts that the symbolic effects of (social, cultural, economic) capital exceed the direct impact of these capitals on the social hierarchy by

constructing a symbolic hierarchy of worthiness, legitimacy, and significance that reinforce social structures. I will discuss this in terms of occupational hierarchies and gender segregation. These hierarchies, and the institutional arrangements in which they are realised, in turn connect to specific lived temporalities, simply put, schedules befitting certain positions. Here, disposable time, available in the right quantity and quality, can be observed as a conduit or barrier to inclusion. In the case study below, parents' time will be analysed to tease out these quantities of time, over the schedule of the working week, and its qualities, with regard to the experience of 'free time', degrees of exhaustion, as well as the effects of being able to sell different kinds of skilled labour time (chapter 4).

What I want to draw attention to with this paragraph is how embedded temporality is across different perspectives on society, from economic logistics to matters of identity and legitimacy, and as a consequence how useful a temporal perspective can be to bring together these different perspectives in order to see their interdependence. The central insight that I take from Bourdieu is the theory of anticipation as a link between past and future, as well as between subjective sense-making and objective contextual conditions. Anticipation and investment can explain tendencies to social stability in a non-deterministic way. Crucially, Bourdieu's approach brings out the importance of power over time as an ability to provide or withhold predictability, cooperation, and resources. The next section will engage this issue of temporality and power through a discussion of theories of government and social coordination, a very short reflection on the history of modernity in terms of separate 'spheres', and a concluding section on the value of time in terms of alienation and eudaimonia.

2.3 Coordinating the Social

Previously in this study, time has been conceptualised as the 'right time' of agency, *kairos*, or opportunity. Time has further been discussed as dialogism, history, and anticipation. These understandings of social time incorporate temporal prescriptions as aspects of social norms:

“Time’s ordering character for social life does not arise from the passage of time or the temporal duration of social systems, but from its normative effect on the structure and coordination of behaviour.” (Bergmann, 1992, p. 99)

When we ask therefore, as Sum & Jessop (2013) do, how societies manage complexity, and the uncertainty that perpetually arises from complexity, we need to direct our attention to the mechanisms by which predictability is enhanced: to forms of standardisation that rarefy social relations and subjectivities into comprehensible, limited spaces of interaction. This rarefaction enforces a necessity to select, it provides selectable alternatives, imbued with tendencies and rationalities that encourage or discourage certain actions. Jessop summarises this in the concept of *structural selectivity*:

“... the concept of structural selectivity highlights the tendency for specific structures and structural configurations to selectively reinforce specific forms of action, tactics, or strategies and to discourage others.” (Jessop, 2005, p. 49)

Structural selectivity resonates with Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of objective opportunity structures and adapted habitus, sharing a view on “regulated liberties” (McNay, 2003, p. 144) in the interplay of agential and structuring.

With regard to selectivities, Jessop already emphasised the importance of spatiotemporality:

“Thus the spatio-temporal selectivity of an organisation, institution, institutional ensemble, or structural configuration involves the diverse modalities in and through which spatial and temporal horizons of action in different fields are produced, spatial and temporal rhythms are created, and some practices and strategies are privileged and others made more difficult to realize according to how they ‘match’ the temporal and spatial patterns inscribed in the relevant structures.” (Jessop, 2005, p. 51)

The central theoretical proposition put forth here is that social relations have their own rhythm. Applied to the case, this means that – simplified – childcare practices are informed by the social temporal norms of the ‘private sphere’, whereas work practices are informed by the norms of the ‘public sphere’ (2.3.2). Glucksmann (1998), amongst others, has demonstrated that this binary understanding of the private and public sphere is historically contingent. Neither all work relations, nor all

care relations, can be grasped through this binary. If taken verbatim, the simplified model obscures the variety of social relations in work and care that are part of daily life. At the same time, it cannot be denied that 'work' and 'care' function as semantic nodes in distinct clusters of association. A linking of *work-public workplace-male-paid-formal* and *care-private home-female-unpaid-informal* does not do justice to the actualities of work and care, but it carries forth cultural patterns of thought that act as a 'norm-to-understand-against'. This becomes visible in participants' articulations of their own daily lives. A small example can be found in my interview with Johanna, a childcare manager and mother:

Johanna: "dad has the [the fulltime job] dad is the mom, so to speak. [...] hehe, dad has the, my husband also cooks, I can . not really cook . and also, that is maybe a little bit of a kind of specialty, where we also actually deviate" (I17, 24:12)

Without wanting to go too deep into analysis here, this example suggests how Johanna constructs her narrative about herself and her family with reference to the constructions of what is a 'mom', and what is a 'dad'. Cooking for the family, traditionally understood as feminine, is drawn upon as a contrast to her husband's role at home, supporting her argument of reversed roles, and the deviating family. This kind of referencing and comparing to an (unspoken) norm is a common feature in the interviews I recorded. It shows what I mean by 'norms-to-understand-against': norms that function as collective ideas, but of which everyone is aware that they do not represent reality. They are more of standard against which the variety of actual experiences can be assessed. Implicit in these norms, very clear in this example, are gendered standards of where and how time ought to be spent.

This function of norms in semiosis is important in analysing narratives, but more profoundly it is relevant to conceptualise how experience, anticipation, and identity are *subjected*. Dorothy Smith's understanding of 'the relations of ruling', Herndl & Licona's treatment of authority, and Bakhtin's reference to centripetal forces all in some form explore what Gramsci called *hegemony* (1999), but also to what Foucault called *gouverner* (1985). I will explore the ideas of hegemony and governing in the next subsection, drawing a connection between power and knowledge, bridging Foucault's notion of conduct and morality with Smith's ideas

about social coordination and texts (2.3.1). This will be followed by a discussion of social relations and reconcilability, as initiated above, adding more historical and theoretical detail. Here I will address the failing complementarity of public and private spheres past the Fordist age (2.3.2). Last, I will raise again the connection between temporality and norms in the shape of the valorisation of time, the experience of alienation and happiness (2.3.3).

2.3.1 Hegemony, Conduct, and Translocal Coordination

“The basic premise of the theory of hegemony is one with which few would disagree: that man is not ruled by force alone, but also by ideas [...] The concept of hegemony [...] means political leadership based on the consent of the led, a consent which is secured by the diffusion and popularization of the worldview of the ruling class.”
(Bates, 1975, pp. 351–52)

Fundamental to both *hegemony* and *gouverner* is the question of ruling, and the relation between force and consent, and inherent therein, subjection. I have discussed subjectification above, pointing out the advantage of conceptually separating the internalisation of subject positions (subjection) in the past and enactment of subjectivity (agency) in the present. This distinction theorises the space for an emerging future, one not wholly determined by or foreseeable from the past, and hence a potential for human action leading to (intended) social change. Nevertheless, I have highlighted through a discussion of Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and anticipation how the opportunities of the present are shaped by the past. In more depth than before, I am now going to discuss such limitations and directions to possible change through the concepts of hegemony and *gouverner*:

“In the Gramscian tradition, hegemony refers to the capacity of ruling social forces to impose their own material interests in such a way that they are acknowledged by other social forces, in particular subaltern ones, as legitimate and representative of the general interest of society.” (Brand and Sekler, 2009, p. 55)

Gramsci’s work marks a cultural turn from 19th to 20th century Marxism, centred on his twin concepts of ideology and hegemony (Bates, 1975, p. 353). Ideology is

produced by an *organic intellectual*, and her 'philosophy' that contains all language, common sense, popular religion, and folklore that make up her cultural environment, as well as her critical reflection upon society, and knowledge imparted through its institutions, such as schools (Gramsci, 1999, p. 626).

Decisively, every human being is – at least in potentia – an intellectual. Gramsci further theorises the creation of new ideologies by intellectuals as leaders of mass movements, and ideologies as tools in attempts to create new political collectives, achieve and maintain hegemony over society (1999, p. 658). This account, addressing the gap between ideological pressures and the existing subject that Paul Smith problematised, mirrors concerns addressed by the Bakhtin Circle about the connection between consciousness, culture, and authority. According to Gramsci, social consciousness can be moulded by civil institutions, such as schools, journals, or parties, to allow for consensual modes of ruling. With the conceptual separation of civil society from political institutions of the state, such as police and courts, Gramsci locates consensual (hegemonic) and coercive (dominant) forms of government in different sets of institutions (Bates, 1975). Neo-Gramscian scholars, such as Jessop, have rejected the conceptual separation between civil and political society, and the separation between consent and coercion on an institutional/organisational level. This indicates a theoretical distinction between Marxist, neo-Gramscian and Foucauldian theories, insofar that some Marxists, including Gramsci, treat the state as a substantial locus of power over society.

Foucault meanwhile studied "the historical constitution of different state forms in and through changing practices of government without assuming that the state has a universal or general essence" which Jessop identifies as "crucial [...] for an anti-essentialist, non-teleological, ex post-functionalist explanation of capitalist development and state formation" (Jessop, 2007, pp. 37–8). This perception of the state derives from Foucault's underlying conceptualisation of power, and inherent in this the issue of subjectivity and morality. According to Foucault, power is not something to be possessed; rather, it is "an action upon an action" (Foucault, 1982, p. 220), a practice enacted in a relationship which delineates the space for possible actions between agents. Power is enacted (Foucault, 1978, pp. 92–102). It is

productive as cause and effect of social practises or ‘technologies’ (Foucault, 2009, p. 2). By this definition, Foucault distances his concept of power from any hierarchical apparatus of sovereignty that implies an essence of power possessed by any institutional body or actor, specifically the state. Power cannot be equated with, but rather produces *durable structured fields of interaction*. These situated patterns are anchored in specific organisations, operational knowledges, and targets. Foucault’s concept ‘gouverner’ is often translated as government, albeit the term ‘governance’ might be more appropriate:

“Government refers to more or less systematized, regulated and reflected modes of power [*technologies*] that go beyond the spontaneous exercise of power over others, following a specific form of reasoning [*rationality*] which defines the telos of action or the adequate means to achieve it.” (Lemke, 2002, p. 53)

Between Foucault’s work on subjectivity in the *History of Sexuality* and the lectures on government at the Collège de France, Lemke (2002) identifies a link in the discussions between the “technologies of the self” and the “technologies of domination”. This link becomes visible in the way Foucault unravels the historical meaning of the term ‘gouverner’ (to govern) – how it denoted not just the practices of the formal state to which it is attached today (government), but also the ruling over and *enacting* of good practices in administration and commerce, the family, and on the self (good governance). This understanding of government was coined by Foucauldian scholars as the “conduct of conduct” (Lemke, 2002).

Given Foucault’s anti-essentialist, historicised understanding of state formation as well as his dispersed view of power in the micro relations of society, he is faced with the problem of explaining how government functions as a translocal mechanism. This is where the link between technologies of domination and technologies of the self becomes crucial. I will explore this link in the context of a governmentality that Foucault called biopolitics. It is relevant to this study empirically, because it pertains to the governing of populations, i.e. social reproduction, as well as to forms of governing that I will continue to discuss in terms of new public management and assessment (5.4).

Biopolitics refers to an increased concern with the interiority of the state in terms of population management and control emerging in the 18th-century and characteristic of 20th-century Europe (Foucault, 2002, 2008). It is linked to a conception of the state as a territorial unit in competition with others, not in terms of territorial expansion, but rather in an international regime of *competitive advantage* through efficient government. Foucault connects biopolitics to a technique of government that treats humans not as individuals, but a multiplicity, which is affected by social risks emerging from urban industrial society, such as public hygiene, health, and birth control (ibid). This governing rationality is implemented through systems of totalisation and individualisation. These go hand in hand with two forms of knowledge about people: “one, globalizing and quantitative, concerning the population” which emerges through the introduction of statistical data-gathering and use by state authorities. The second form of knowledge, “analytical, concerning the individual” (Foucault, 1982, p. 215), is linked to a ‘pastoral power’, which refers historically to the power of the priest to influence the conduct of people through the means of confession and the provision of salvation. In a modern context, salvation-in-the-next life has been replaced with welfare-in-this-life. Through a transfer from civil organisations, such as the Church, friendly societies, or unions, the welfare state takes over these functions of government. Confession has moved from the domain of the priest to that of the doctor, psychologist, human resource manager, or teacher as ‘assessment’. These knowledge systems engage in a technique of subjection:

“This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. In is a form of power which makes individuals subjects [...]: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge” (Foucault, 1982, p. 212).

Creating a system of knowledge that ‘conducts conduct’, Foucault suggest, firstly means to create some form of *moral* code (Foucault, 1985, p. 25). But secondly, morality also designates the actual human behaviour in response to a moral code.

Thirdly, there is also an issue how one “ought to ‘conduct oneself’ – that is, the manner in which one ought to form oneself as an ethical subject” (ibid). The latter is important, because it addresses the alternatives that are left open by the interpretation of the moral code. The selection of alternatives is connected to the “modes of subjection [...] the way in which the individual establishes his relation to the rule and recognizes himself as obliged to put it into practice” (Foucault, 1985, p. 27) in a long-term construction of the ethical self. This self feels “responsible”, which compels questions about not only the roles of identities, but also the importance of “self-esteem” in the shaping of social power relations (Lemke, 2002, p. 59). The contemporary literature contesting ‘accountability’ in new public management (Tsui and Cheung, 2004; Burton and van den Broek, 2009; Griffith and Smith, 2014) draws on this issue of the moral subject in the context of welfare reform, interrogating the role of front-line social workers. This draws attention to morality in terms of enactment and representation, as I will briefly discuss for childcare managers below (5.4.3).

Limitations in Foucault’s work are apparent in his focus on the history of systems of thought, made explicit for instance in his studies of the “art of government” rather than the “ways in which governors really governed” (Foucault, 2010, p. 2). This focus leaves unexamined the mechanisms through which the ideas Foucault traces become effective in real life, and how they act on subjects. It excludes an empirical enquiry into the negotiation of discourses in ongoing human interaction.

“Post-structuralist theorizing of discourse, including Michel Foucault’s, presuppose, but leave unanalyzed, the socially organized practices and relations that objectify, including but not reducible to those visible in discourse itself.” (Smith, 2009, p. 5)

In order to problematise the relation between discourse and enactment, rule formulations and behaviour, needs to be examined separately. By this I simply mean that the verbalisation or formalisation of social rules, such as for example in written law, are distinct from the daily *enactment* (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012) of that law: first, as separate entities; and following from that, because there is no guarantee of compliance or uniformity of response to the rule formulation. To examine how social rules are reproduced in everyday life, the mechanisms need to

be uncovered by which this reproduction takes place as something that limits other possible action. As suggested by Foucault above, this extends further into how individuals take up moral codes and apply them to themselves.

The key contribution Dorothy Smith throughout her complete work makes to the theorisation of this relation between rule formulations and rule following is the insight that modern forms of governing usually involve *textual* mechanisms of coordination:

“The relations of ruling form a complex field of coordinated activities. They are activities in and in relation to texts, and texts coordinate them as relations. Text-mediated relations are the forms in which power is generated and held in contemporary societies. The materiality of the text and its indefinite replicability creates a peculiar ground in which it can seem that language, thought, culture, formal organization, have their own being, outside lived time and the actualities of people’s living – other than as the latter become objects of action or investigation from within the textual.” (Smith, 2009, p. 5)

This form of coordination creates a link between the local particular and more general organisations of ruling, which it is possible to investigate empirically. Smith (2009) refers back to Foucault work on power/knowledge, highlighting the use of text in the domain of mass media and bureaucracy as a site for capitalist and state coordination. These forms of social innovation become possible historically with the invention of movable type²⁴. Examples of textual coordination are electoral processes, the news coverage and circulation of written legislation, and more broadly the dissemination of values and problematisations from politically organised groups towards the reader. Another form of textual coordination highlighted by IE scholars is management based on the use of forms and other predesigned texts to guide work processes. The spread of IT systems for the purposes of enterprise resource planning and the technical possibilities of monitoring performance through these are an important contemporary example of

²⁴ It is not the invention of printing per se, but the acceleration and simplification of the printing process using metal movable type, invented by Gutenberg around 1450 CE, that makes large-scale use of texts possible.

disciplinary technologies²⁵. A lot of IE work has been carried out with a focus on front-line workers in health (Rankin, 2003; McGibbon, Peter and Gallop, 2010), education (Nichols and Griffith, 2009), and childcare (Weigt, 2006; McNeil, 2008), often by former professionals themselves. Much of this work has criticised the effects of accountability discourses and new public management (Griffith and Smith, 2014). I will apply these frameworks in particular in section 5.4.

Smith's (2009, p. 9 ff) critique of Foucault centres on his analytic standpoint outside of the stories he tells about power/knowledge, outside the subject matter of such situations. Foucault's method operates top-down in the sense that it starts from the general, and exemplifies the situated. These examples therefore remain spurious accounts of a hypothesised power/knowledge. Smith, without developing her work to that purpose, inverts some of Foucault's method, starting with recurring patterns of local experience, and seeking the concrete organisations that create the general power/knowledge functional within this relation between organisation and local experience. Thereby her method goes beyond a local-general (micro-macro) dichotomy, linking up a network of historical localities which are influencing each other translocally:

“... while the relations of ruling connect across local sites of people's living, they are produced and reproduced as a local historical organization of the work of particular people in particular local settings.” (Smith, 2009, p. 11)

From this theoretical premises the methodology of IE develops, recording local experiences as an entry point, and expanding along social relations to the next hierarchical level of governance, to understand how it influenced the local experience. The focus on conduct and governance as techniques of social coordination makes it possible to address not only government as an arena, but coordination through all the relations that make up society. In this framework, it

²⁵ These systems automatise and regulate work flows between different employees through the use of forms, integrating and collecting data across business processes in order to measure performance in real time and through specific indicators. There is an important overlap between the implementation of such software and the involvement of consultants in companies. Data collected from business processes can thereby be used to identify spaces for saving resources and becomes key in restructuring processes.

becomes possible to link different scales of formal government (international, national, federal, local) with everyday life by explicating translocal processes of ruling. Tracing relations conducted through policy outside of the formal state, private institutions such as companies, associations, and the family become visibly linked into a larger map that shows the relations of ruling within society. This relational research includes the texts and knowledge that travel in these social relations, as well as the forms of power that organise relational strategies, the mechanisms of enforcement and their consequences.

Having established an account of the 'how' of social coordination in general, and a research strategy to match it, I will turn in the following section to the relevant case: work-family reconcilability.

2.3.2 Reconcilability and Spheres: A Matter of Time

Before commencing with the final part of the theoretical discussion, I would like to remind the reader of the empirical theme: reconcilability (see 4.1); the necessity of bringing together practices of work and family in such a way that they are temporally compatible (synchronised). To the extent to which these practices form stable sets, enacted in temporal and spatial separation, it is possible to speak of distinct *spheres* (Glucksmann, 1998). This language of spheres has been applied to differentiate between the public and private, denoting a moral and practical distinction between gendered lives. The idea of a historical gendered duality of spheres has been challenged empirically. The degree of separateness depends on the concrete sociohistorical context, and cannot be assumed as a general condition (Glucksmann, 1998). Furthermore, the binary of private and public in liberal thought has been said to mystify the subordination of women, confined to the private sphere; the universal individual citizen as the subject of liberal theory is modelled on male lives, and obscures the patriarchal character of private relations in capitalist society (Pateman, 1989). Pateman goes as far as to suggest that "the dichotomy between the private and the public is central to almost two centuries of feminist writing and struggle; it is, ultimately, what the feminist movement is about" (1989, p. 118).

A historically situated approach needs to identify a sphere by the exclusiveness of practices allocated to specific spaces, times, and people. The test for reconcilability is to ask: Does this arrangement allow individuals to travel between 'spheres' and take up multiple subject positions? Are the respective temporalities and spaces traversable? Or: Does this arrangement demand individuals to be in two places at one time, say, at the day-care centre to pick up their child *and* at work in a meeting? Speaking about spheres in such a way, not unlike how Bourdieu speaks about fields, enables an inquiry into the temporal structures of societies.

The separation of spheres clearly appears in the 19th century bourgeois male-breadwinner-model (Frevert, 1989). Therein, private and public sphere could be reconciled by gendered specialisation. It also mark a class distinctions, because for the working class housewifery was never an economic option (Canning, 1992). Working mothers needed to do both, the paid and family work (double burden). This became more difficult with the separation of workplace and home, pointing to spatial changes in the social organisation of industrial production that continue to shape contemporary society. In the 19th century historical setting, we can also locate the emergence of a new institutions: the kindergarten (5.1.1), and maternity leave, the precursor of parental leave (4.3.1). The theoretical challenge here has been succinctly put down by Harvey:

"The objectivity of time and space is given in each case by the material practices of social reproduction, and to the degree that these latter vary geographically and historically, so we find that social time and social space are differentially constructed. [...] The material practices from which our concepts of space and time flow are as varied as the range of individual and collective experiences. The challenge is to put some overall interpretive frame around them that will bridge the gap between cultural change and the dynamics of political economy." (Harvey, 1990, p. 211)

Harvey's central point is that the conceptualisation of time and space arises from social practices. Time and space are therefore both socially constructed *and* objective – 'objective' however only within their own cultural frame of reference and enactment. As practices change, so need the concepts of time and space. Bergmann (1992) conceptualises these different analytic perspectives on time as

time reckoning, the semiosis of time, and *synchronisation*²⁶, a matching of social schedules which is improved in capitalist development by a trend to efficiently organise complex sets of practices with the help of clock-time. Zerubavel (1976) expands conceptions of time in *scheduling*: duration, sequence, timing, tempo, and linearity/cyclicity. In the scheduling process – the negotiation of timetables – the amount of self-control versus environmental constraint pose a central criterion to assess power relations. This historical insight can also be found in Polanyi's work on primary accumulation and Foucault's conceptualisation of discipline and the "critique of political anatomy" (Foucault, 1977; Polanyi, 2001). Thompson (1967) traces historically that increasing precision of time measurement became instrumental in exerting control over workers' time habits. He insists, however, that it is not the invention of the clock itself that changed common time-reckoning away from natural process towards standardised clock-time, but the need for synchronisation of practices that arose much later in the development of industrial society. This need only arrived with the implementation of large-scale mechanised production and logistics, before which labour patterns were irregular (Thompson, 1967, p. 71).

With regard to reconcilability and control over time, a differentiation of time-reckoning between the public and private sphere that Thompson reports is worth noting:

"... despite school times and television times, the rhythms of women's work in the home are not wholly attuned to the measurement of the clock. The mother of young children has an imperfect sense of time and attends to other human tides. She has not yet altogether moved out of the conventions of 'pre-industrial' society."

(Thompson, 1967, p. 79)

Thompson's observation appears a little patronising, yet indicates something rather important: young children do not obey the regularities of society, and caring for them, neither can those responsible for their immediate care. I will return to this

²⁶ The sociology of time has developed this concept from Durkheim, whose writings also influenced the Annales School (LeFebvre, Bloch, Braudel) and Bourdieu (Sorokin and Merton, 1937; Bergmann, 1992).

issue in the empirical analysis, but for now stay with the general idea that the private and public spheres could have distinct temporalities.

Investigating the scheduling of different spheres of life, and how actors navigate between them, sheds light on which institutional timetables take priority and direct individual action, that is which social relations are dominant. For this purpose, I will examine Gluckmann's (2005, 1998) 'total social organisation of labour' approach (TSOL) and her analysis of female textile and casual workers' oral history. The TSOL focusses on the interconnections in production-distribution-exchange-consumption processes, the interconnections between paid and unpaid work, markets and other modes of economy, formal and informal sectors. Temporality is here the overarching analytic category. A distinction between work and labour is refused. Not in the least because categorising what is work, and what is not, is difficult theoretically and empirically (see 1.2 and 3.4), the TSOL seeks to articulate divisions of labour and their coordination in their historical specificity, rather than to provide universal categorisations (Glucksmann, 2005). Especially in the distinction to free time, the embeddedness of certain types of work (especially emotional work) is emphasised. On weekend outings, for example, the supervision of children, even in leisure activities, can be considered work for the supervisor/parent, simultaneously to being 'free time'. My participants grappled with this distinction when asked about their weekly time-uses. As I will show in the analysis below, articulating examples of complex time-uses can convey more insight than trying to fit them into dichotomous abstract categories.

In her historical work on English working women Glucksmann (1998, p. 252) insists that *distinct temporalities* are constitutive for the separation of spheres, or lack thereof: Textile workers experienced the home as a space for autonomy, an individualised space, whereas time in the workplace was controlled from above. This distinction did not exist for casual workers. First, their paid work and domestic work occurred in the same places (for example, doing paid washing and her own wash). But furthermore, the hurry to reconcile different tasks within the community temporal order did not leave much individual time control. The work dedicated to children and husbands put casual workers/housewives into temporal dependence

to school timetables and male working hours, their paid work to the schedules of the neighbourhood. Their 'public' took place in the local community that could not be distinguished from the 'private' home:

"If the public sphere for casual women workers comprised the local community and other women, rather than formal workplaces and distant world events, then it could be argued that for them the public was predominant over the private: they were subject to community norms about the right way of doing things; gossip represented a means of social control; respectability was conferred by community consensus."

(Glucksmann, 1998, p. 253)

This comparison exemplified how important historical detail is to understand to what extent separate spheres, such as the private or public, exist. Not only is the dividing line perpetually traversed by working parents; the division also only exists for certain organisational forms of paid work. The binaries of women/private, men/public are simply too abstract to explain much. This is why a more historicised, differentiated conception of spheres is theoretically important.

Another implication of Glucksmann's study is that flexible, informal segments of the labour market are not a novel 'postmodern' phenomenon. Casual work, often taking place in the home and of a gendered nature, is a longstanding feature of capitalism. In order to systematise work relations, Cox provides a set of categories that describe historical and contemporary social relations of production, such as "subsistence, household, self-employed, enterprise labour market, or state corporatism" (Cox, 1987, p. 32). These "translate the general category of production into concepts that express concrete historical forms of the ways in which production has been organised" (Cox, 1987, p. 1). The scope of my own work does not allow me to look at these systematically, but I explore how relations of production yield different working hours and flexibilities. These in turn result in unequal access to childcare, which is usually provided to cover standard working hours only (5.3.3.3).

To summarise, in this section I have set out that time is a key dimension from which to examine social relations. The extent to which social relations of production and reproduction are reconcilable depends on the degree of synchronisation between

‘spheres’ and the mobilities available to traverse between them. Having compatible schedules and/or control over one’s time makes reconciliation between different social roles possible. Analysing these rhythms not only yields insights about the coordination of activities, it also informs us about the power dynamics of time control and the values and social norms that guide collective action. In the next and last theoretical section, I will reflect key temporal concepts elaborated above in their relevance to the valuation of time, and experiences of alienation and happiness, i.e. questions of a ‘good-life-balance’.

2.3.3 The Value of Time: Alienation and Eudaimonia

Starting from the logic that society evolves around two modes of simplification, semiosis and structuration (Sum and Jessop, 2013), it follows that collective norms about time-use act as a semiotic basis for the daily coordination of tasks. The limited availability of time (chronos) provides an ultimate constraint on what can be done. The result is a necessity to select and prioritise certain time-uses, and on a collective social scale, a necessity to coordinate individual participation in collective action, that is, to facilitate a temporally synchronised division of life and labour.

Reconcilability is grounded in temporal social order, which takes on historically specific forms. These forms, I suggested above, are reproduced through social norms that attach to practices not only their ‘time and place for everything’, but often also an exchange value (wage) in a monetarised market economy. After all, “Time is Money” (Franklin and Hall, 1748, pp. 375–7). Time framed as a resource and source of all economic value is foundational to theories of Classical Political Economy, centred on the labour theory of value (1904; Ricardo, 1821; Marx, 1971). Marxist theories problematise capitalist labour relations in terms of the extractions of rents by capital owners at the expense of workers. Conflicts around fair wages in social professions can be articulated in such a framework. Meanwhile theories of *alienation*, equally inspired by Marx, go beyond accounts of economic exploitation. Going back to the central conclusion already forefronted in the introduction, I posit that the multifaceted time problems German professional parents articulate

towards work family reconcilability, their 'crisis of care', must be understood not as resource scarcity, but as alienation in terms of temporal disempowerment (2.2.4).

Providing an overview on its use in classical sociology, Seeman (1959) distinguishes between five dimensions of alienation. These repeatedly resonate with time concepts discussed above (in italics):

1) Powerlessness, expressed from an individual standpoint as the experience of a discrepancy between the power and desire of control (*over time*);

2) Meaninglessness, a kind of unintelligibility in the everyday and low future *predictability*. This may be accompanied by an ideologically-centralised and instrumental doctrine to replace situated reasoning, for instance theorised by Mannheim (1940, p. 59) as a growth of "functional rationalities". A recent perspective can be found in Smith's treatment of the out-of-body experience (p. 72);

3) Normlessness, a weakening of discipline to social standards of morality towards self-interest. Norms that recognise *time as a scarce commodity*, such as punctuality, or rising early-going to bed timely, feature as part of the modern ideal of the worker (Thompson, 1967, p. 94). Thompson explicitly discusses these values and the institutions behind them as a means to discipline workers.

"In all these ways – by the division of labour; the supervision labour; fines; bells and clocks; money incentives; preachings and schoolings; the suppression of fairs and sports – new labour habits were formed, and a new time-discipline was imposed."

(Thompson, 1967, p. 90)

4) Isolation, as a withdrawal from mainstream culture and society, in the extreme: rebellion;

5) Self-estrangement, which narrowly can be understood as a loss of pride or investment in one's own work, or abstractly, as the loss of a sense of intrinsic meaning in an activity (remember Himmelweit's concern about the intrinsic value of caring). It is extremely interesting to note that Seeman (1959, p. 790) further abstracts this last notion in terms of *anticipation*, whereby he posits that a loss of intrinsic meaning makes an activity dependent on a future reward. An alienated

human thus orients perpetually towards an *imagined future*. The experience of happiness is moved from the concrete (or bodily) to the imaginary.

Time concepts embedded in these dimensions will be applied in the case analysis below: (1) as control over time, in employment or with regard to kindergarten opening hours; (2) predictability in terms of work life flexibilisation, or transitions between parental and institutional childcare; (3) temporal norms in their moral and disciplinary effect, where high expectations to availability can lead to perpetual feelings of guilt for ‘having no time’; (4) isolation as a consequence of asynchronicity; (5) or indeed, a deferral of wishes into the future – for a baby or a family trip – as discussed in terms of ‘inconspicuous consumption’ (chapter 6).

Given this dissertation’s concern with the ‘good life’, it is further helpful to briefly discuss a diametrically related concept to self-estrangement: *self-realisation*. Ryan & Deci (2001) review the literature on happiness, discussing self-realisation/eudaimonia as a key dimension to wellbeing. The concept eudaimonia draws on the Aristotelian tradition, positing natural or objective human needs against individual wants (hedonism). Psychologists in this tradition have defined self-realisation as “autonomy, personal growth, self-acceptance, life purpose, mastery, and positive relatedness” (Ryff and Keyes, 1995). Waterman (1993) suggests, as paraphrased succinctly by Ryan & Deci:

“that eudaimonia occurs when people’s life activities are most congruent or meshing with deeply held values and are holistically or fully engaged. Under such circumstances people would feel intensely alive and authentic, existing as who they really are.” (Ryan and Deci, 2001, p. 146)

This depiction of eudaimonia resonates with Bourdieu’s understanding of self-temporalisation, or the idea of ‘time sovereignty’, understood as the ability to strategically orient towards the future (to plan) or ‘make time’ for self-realisation. I will return to these categories in the conclusion to emphasise, first, a lack of synchronisation of work and childcare schedules as foundational to parents’ temporal disempowerment, and second, an ongoing conflict over ‘good’ time-uses and adequate recognition for care.

3 From 'Work' to 'Time': Methodology

From the early stages of this project onwards I wanted to examine the experiences of carers in the context of their social networks and knowledge circulated therein. First, to understand how these experiences are structured by translocal forces, such as policy and markets, and by local forces, such as immediate social relations, and second, to see how agency arises in these local contexts. As already mentioned above, this dynamic between the local and translocal is a cornerstone in the approach of Institutional Ethnography (IE):

“the investigation of empirical linkages among local settings of everyday life, organizations, and translocal processes of administration and governance.” (DeVault and McCoy, 2006, p. 15)

Dorothy Smith's account of the out-of-body experience and relations of ruling introduced above lays the theoretical foundations, from which IE scholars have developed research strategies, tools, and modes of analysis that work with different types of data and research contexts (Smith, 2006). I will begin the methodological exposition of IE with some comments on generalisability (3.1), and how translocal mechanisms of ruling function as sources of generalisability to the same extent as they function as sources of structuration. The recommendations that are especially relevant for this project deal with how to use interview data in IE (3.2) (DeVault and McCoy, 2006). As noted above, this research project is not an ethnography. Rather IE is utilised as a source of inspiration on how to conduct fieldwork and analyse interview data in such a way as to be consistent with the theory underlying IE (see section 2.2.2 on 'experience'). Methods are here seen as an integrated part of theory, and not as a buffet from which to independently pick and choose. This pertains to the cohesion between research questions, levels of abstraction, conceptual choices, data gathering, and practical analysis. As a consequence, methodology cannot be reduced to technical aspects of data gathering and handling.

Sartori (1970) famously warned of the dangers of emphasising technical methodical precision over *logos*, the need for research to reflect its own logic, concepts, and

limitations. This chapter is therefore dedicated to an in-depth explanation of the logic behind the ways in which fieldwork and analysis were conducted, and how these have in turn shaped conceptual choices and theorisation. Lessons learned throughout four years of research were in part conceptual and in part practical, and culminated in a change of key concepts from 'work' to 'time' (3.4).

An absolutely foundational choice that shaped the whole project was to situate the inquiry in the relations between policy and the everyday. The initial research problem formulation arose from everyday experience with reconcilability problems. As already discussed in the theory chapter, it was further refined through an engagement with IE, following Foucault's logic of 'conceptual needs'. The order of reasoning underlying this project hence works primarily – but not exclusively – from the inside out; that is, the order of the argument begins from an empirical starting point – or research problem – and is oriented towards arriving at a theoretical explanation. In practice, of course, there was repetitive recursion between transitive and intransitive moments. Choosing a starting point in the everyday – here through stakeholder interviews – confronts the scholar with the challenge of needing to think beyond the 'obvious', to 'make the data strange'. Interviews and texts, as opposed to participant observation, have the dubious advantage of yielding data in which practices are already codified in spoken and written language. But analysis rejecting literal theories of meaning needs to problematise these 'given formulations':

First, there is the question in how far participants' accounts can adequately represent actual behaviour in everyday life. Section 3.2 will explain in detail how IE informs the treatment of interview accounts in this project.

Secondly, there is also the issue of creating (and consistently applying) a suitable meta-language of scientific concepts for the purposes of analysis. This pertains to the kinds of technical problems that arise in scholarly practice: Is X a 'thing' and what do I call it? Is X an instance of Y? Is Y a suitable category to begin with? Chapter 2 above presented a final account of useful theory. I will demonstrate a central part of the 'conceptual journey' to that stage in section 3.4.

Thirdly, and profoundly interconnected with the second point, there is a strong ethical-political dimension of conceptual choices implied in Butler's understanding of resignification. Any scholarly activity taking the irrevocable political nature of concepts seriously cannot claim total academic neutrality. The strategy I use throughout this study to mitigate biases is to make conceptual considerations and their political implications transparent. I am a thirty-year-old, childless, female academic from Cologne. This allows me a 'native' or 'organic intellectual' insight into my case, but it also impacts my research, perhaps most centrally the choice to design this study to explain local experience, to empower local actors by providing a 'map' of the social structures that constitute 'our' everyday life. My participants are parents and workers engaged in and around childcare in Cologne, NRW. I will discuss the particularities of my case selection – spatial and personal – in sections 3.3 and 3.4.

3.1 Generalisability

A lot of qualitative and case study research projects refer to Burawoy's (1998) extended case method (ECM) to legitimate their claims to generalisability. IE departs from Burawoy's logic: how so, I will reiterate based on Smith's own comparison (Smith, 2005, pp. 35–7). IE and ECM share certain features, such as a general idea to 'study up' from local contexts, or using ethnography on the local 'micro level'. In my study, the 'micro' was accessed through interviews, not a fully-fledged ethnography. The comparison between IE and ECM is nevertheless helpful to convey how the shift to the extralocal or 'macro' is made:

ECM is ethnographic in local practice, and draws on theory for the broader explanatory categories that the scope of the empirical study cannot cover.

"The extended case method applies reflexive science to ethnography in order to extract the general from the unique, to move from the 'micro' to the 'macro,' and to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on *preexisting theory*." (Burawoy, 1998, p. 5, emphasis added)

Burawoy promotes a reflexive science that reconstructs and expands theory based on the empirical discovery of anomalies. Therein he seeks to bring into interaction – but thereby arguably maintains – a duality of *ethnography*, understood as recording the world from a participant’s standpoint, and *science*: falsifiable and generalisable models.

“Hermeneutic” approaches associated with the interpretative or linguistic turn (Gadamer, Rorty, or Geertz) have denied the possibility of a positive science, defined by the “4Rs” of reactivity, reliability, replicability, and representativeness (Burawoy, 1998, p. 13). This is because of the uncontrollability of contextual effects in data collection, which positive science tries so hard to avoid or compensate for. Burawoy’s strategy is not to avoid, but to embrace these effects. This can occur in interviews through a better appreciation of the reflexive possibilities that occur when a participant is “[extracted from] her from her own space and time and [subjected] to the space and time of the interviewer” (Burawoy, 1998, p. 14). Interviews should virtually follow the participant to gain information from the discursive possibilities of interaction between interviewer and interviewee. Non-discursive dimensions, meanwhile, require practical interaction (‘doing things together’), and cannot be discovered through interviews (ibid, p.15). While these latter points about interview strategy are widely accepted by IE proponents, IE has no ex-ante commitment to theory or theoretical improvement. More radically than ECM, IE searches for situated mechanisms to explain local experiences.

The break between ECM and IE happens where inquiry goes beyond the local. Both Smith and Burawoy emphasise the need to situate individual interactions and relations within a field, to use Bourdieu’s term. This field-metaphor indicates a historical, situated space of interaction, which is structured by certain social forces and processes:

“These social forces are the effects of other social processes that for the most part lie *outside the realm of investigation*. Viewed as external to the observer these social forces can be studied with positive methods that become the handmaidens of reflexive science.” (Burawoy, 1998, p. 15, italics added)

The important difference between ECM and IE lies in how – theoretically and practically – generalisations are legitimated. ECM, where the local ethnography needs further explanation, seeks support in theory. There is hence a break between the micro-ethnography and the macro-positive science. Thereby ECM can be very helpful in synthesising results between studies, or working interdisciplinary/inter-methodologically. But what it fails to grasp empirically is how ruling takes place, how the ‘external’ forces that shape a field come from somewhere. IE, problematising just this, rejects the micro-macro dichotomy of social structuration, and instead seeks to explicate the relations between localities: the translocal relations of ruling, that is, of governance (Smith, 2005, pp. 35–7).

“... the ethnographic inquiry pushes beyond the local settings of people’s everyday experience, and it must do so by finding those extended relations that coordinate multiple settings translocally.” (Smith, 2005, p. 49)

Everyday reproductions of standards are explained through the relations between more and less powerful organisations, such as between central and local governments, governments and welfare providers, or providers and clients. The dispersion of standards (e.g. in policy) and related enforcement mechanisms (e.g. audits, quality management) can be observed in the localities of production and reception. Their scope of influence determines the scale on which generalisations can be made. This brings into empirical focus what Burawoy calls “systemic features” of a field (1998, p. 15).

Following the IE pathway to generalisation has immediate impact upon the fieldwork organisation, especially the selection of participants and research sites. Rather than observing one place in the greatest detail, institutional ethnographers have to travel across a network of translocal social relations. Interview questions need to probe into these relations, inquire into a participant’s social network, translocally coordinated practices, and sources of information. Texts are a key resource in understanding the facilitation of translocal management. I will explain how IE perceives interviews in the following section, and then move on to give some practical information about participant selection.

3.2 Interviews in Institutional Ethnography

It has been established in the beginning of the theory chapter that this project follows a dialogical constructivist ontology, in which communication is the foundation of the social. I have pointed to the importance of situated interpretation and responsiveness, and in the latter part of the theory chapter I have discussed coordination and governance. DeVault & McCoy (2006) have explored what impact such an ontology has on the study of institutions and the use of interviews.

IE is inspired by the idea of creating a map of knowledge, useful for those inhabiting the field under study to understand mechanisms that impact their everyday lives which exceed personal experience. Given its explorative logic, IE fieldwork is usually not fully planned in advance. Most commonly, research follows a sequence of “(a) identify an experience, (b) identify some of the institutional processes that are shaping that experience, and (c) investigate these processes in order to describe analytically how they operate as the grounds of the experience” (DeVault and McCoy, 2006, p. 20). The starting point in experience can be autobiographical, or found through engaging with participants. Given that I am not a parent or childcare practitioner, this study begins with the experiences of participants, albeit my own upbringing and life in the same city allow me to draw on my ‘local outsider’ perspective on parenthood and the general experience of German culture. I chose the experiences of practitioners as an entry point into a network of social relations around childcare. I then asked ‘back’ to learn about their relations to the parents, and ‘ahead’ to learn about their relations to public administration. To map this chain of relations, I interviewed parents, practitioners, childcare managers, and local civil servants. Additional information came from NGOs active in this field. The set of questions I asked in semi-structured interviews pertained to the work and schedules of interviewees, but also explicitly inquired about the relations to other groups of actors in this network, and how these relations were coordinated (DeVault and McCoy, 2006, pp. 20–32). This includes asking questions about hierarchies, legitimation, and conflict.

Analysis began simultaneously to the data collection with the search for similarities in participant accounts, repetitive patterns in the description of relations to others, and the search for mechanisms that generate these patterns. The latter takes the researcher beyond the interview, and into the realm of managerial artefacts. In my case, this included childcare legislation, IT systems, and forms used in the implementation of regulation, and further interviews with managers responsible for implementing organisational processes with the aid of these artefacts. The resulting body of data in this project is a combination of various texts encountered in the field (anything from registration forms to parliamentary documents) and interview transcripts. I followed the advice of IE proponents to keep coding simple, indexing problems or situations, and paying attention to institutional language and the referencing of texts (DeVault and McCoy, 2006, pp. 38–39).

It is important to note that – as in any study – there are limits to the scope and depth of relations that can be investigated. Rather than mapping the totality of a field, what IE can do is tease out particular strands of relations to make connections visible (DeVault and McCoy, 2006, p. 17). IE uses interviews not to study individual subjectivities, but to tap into a social network and learn about which and how connections exist in everyday life. This has implications how generalisability is conceived of. DeVault & McCoy express this very clearly:

“When interviews are used in this approach, they are used not to reveal subjective states, but to locate and trace the points of connection amongst individuals working in different parts of institutional complexes of activity. [...] The researcher’s purpose in an institutional ethnography is not to generalize about the group of people interviewed, but to find and describe social processes that have generalizing effects. [...] The general relevance of the inquiry comes, then, not from a claim that local settings are similar, but from the capacity of the research to disclose features of ruling that operate across many local settings.” (DeVault and McCoy, 2006, p. 18)

What IE does not propose is to mistake texts and narratives for other practices. Under the title *Talk is Cheap*, Jerolmack & Khan (2014) draw attention to the common fallacy to confuse what people say with what they do. Psychology knows this problem as “attitude-behaviour consistency” (ABC) or “attitudinal fallacy” (ibid,

p. 179). Cultural theories have grappled with the issue in which ways sense-making and collective habits of expression shape or are shaped by non-semiotic practices, or in how far they can differ. The methodological implications affect how interviews are understood. If viewed as “a window into the normative and cognitive frames that actors use to explain their actions and anchor their identity”, Jerolmack & Khan (2014, p. 189) criticise, this ignores findings that interpretive frames are always context-bound, and that meanings of events are interactionally co-constructed. It is for this reason that the authors advocate ethnographic methods that can capture the “collective act” and depart from individualising accounts of sense-making and action (ibid, p. 202). This is consistent with the dialogical constructivism advocated in the theory chapter, the rejection of literal meanings, and a performative, situated understanding of identities. Living up to this analytic commitment is not easy, but I will take care throughout the analysis not to conflate discourse with non-semiotic practices.

At this point one may ask: why only interviews, why not participant observation? The answer here, at least, is simple. Ethical participant observation requires time and trust, and the researcher to be welcome at the site of research. These conditions were not given in my environment, where the privacy of families should not be violated, and where professional carers work long hours and thus have little time and interest in ‘extracurricular’ research activities. The salience of childcare in German media has led to a flood of research requests for childcare managers, who have become quite selective in their cooperation. Especially when children are affected by the research, managers reported a need to protect the children from unwanted scrutiny. It is impossible to observe childcare work without observing children. Consent is an issue here. It is therefore for practical reasons – a lack of feasible access – that participant observation was not possible. Interviews in homes and kindergartens provided the less intrusive ‘second-best’ alternative.

It is also worth repeating here that IE requires the researcher to go beyond local ethnography. Interviews take up significantly less time in one place, which has its disadvantages in decreasing the depth and types of available information, but this method also enables research in more distinct places and with more people, who

are not in immediate contact with one another. This is advantageous in increasing the scope of this project to detect similarities that cannot be explained by immediate interpersonal local relations and conventions.

3.3 Cologne, NRW: Research Spaces

A term yet left underspecified in this dissertation is the 'local'. As stated above, I chose the city of Cologne – *Köln* in German – in North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW), Germany, as my exclusive fieldwork site. NRW is the most populous federal state in Germany with 17.9 million inhabitants, of which approximately 28% have a migration background (Statistisches Landesamt Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2017). NRW is therefore more populous than the whole of Eastern Germany. At its core, the Rhein-Ruhr area can be considered Europe's third largest metropolitan area, after the London and Paris areas.

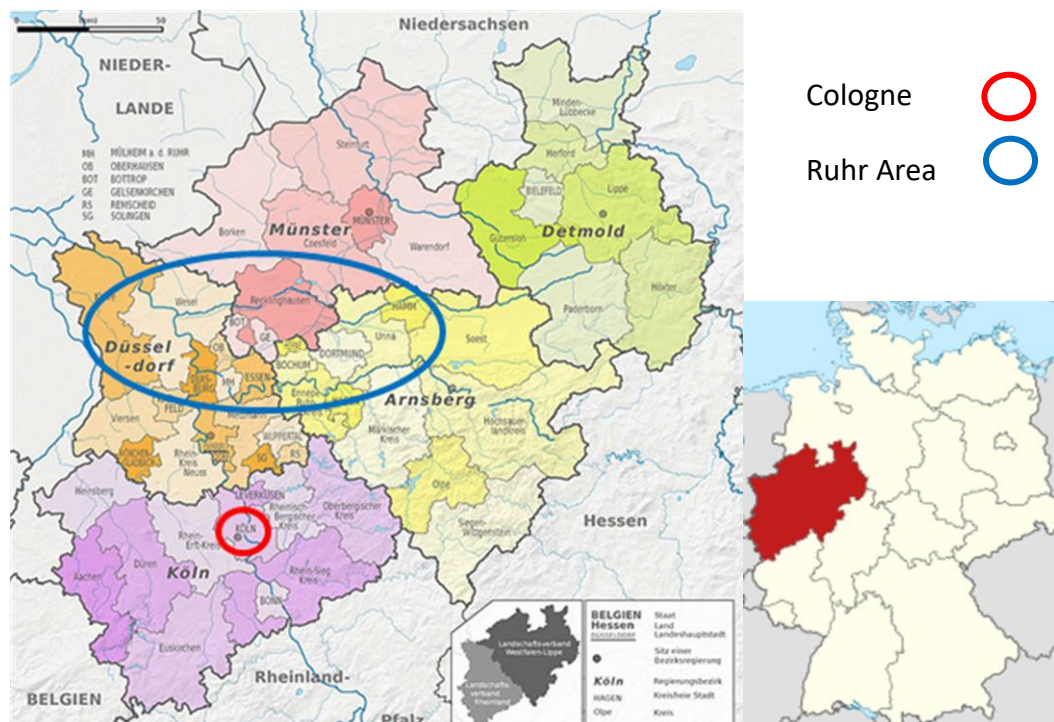


Figure 6 NRW Map (Wikimedia Commons, no date)

Historically one of the most important industrial areas in Europe, it has been subject to ongoing deindustrialisation. The Ruhr area has been affected particularly badly, not unlike northern England, whereas large cities like Cologne or Düsseldorf have

done relatively well. With an influx of German and foreign migrants, Cologne is a growing city, and has the highest population density in NRW with 2667.6 inhabitants per square metre, reaching 1,080,394 inhabitants in 2017 (Statistisches Landesamt Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2017).

In NRW overall, unemployment rates were low at 4.2%. The employment rate of all those age 15-64 reached 72% in 2017, with 22% employed in industrial production and 77% in services. Unemployment was somewhat higher in Cologne at 8-8.5% throughout 2017. 71% of all employees had jobs with social insurance contributions ("sozialversicherungspflichtige Beschäftigte"), of which 26% worked part-time (ibid). The gross gender pay gap in NRW 2017 was 22%. Large enterprises in industry, insurance, and media are located in Cologne.

Politically, both NRW and Cologne were historically dominated by the social-democrat SPD. Since 2005, with the election of minister-president J. Rüttgers (CDU), NRW has been considered a swing-state. The family policy reforms considered in this dissertation thus occurred in a period of changing governments at different scales of state: on the national scale, the reforms were prepared by the SPD (family minister Rita Süßmuth), but implemented by the CDU in liberal and social-democratic (grand) coalitions (Merkel-government, family minister Ursula von der Leyen). In NRW, the reforms (e.g. KiBiz) were largely executed under the CDU-FDP conservative-liberal coalition 2005-2010, which was replaced by a social democratic-green coalition 2010-2015 under SPD minister-president Hannelore Kraft. Since 2017 NRW has returned to a conservative-liberal government.

Founded by the Romans in 50 CE, Cologne is shaped by its history as an archdiocese under religious control, its early status as a free imperial city in the first German Empire, followed by French and Prussian occupation. Cologne has historical linkages to the catholic Zentrum party, and later CDU. In the last decades municipal elections were dominated by the Volksparteien CDU and SPD, whereas both the liberal FDP and the Greens have a strong history in the city. Since 2014 Cologne has an independent mayor, supported by a conservative-green coalition. In 2017, 15% of Cologne's inhabitants identified as protestant and 34.3% as catholic, putting the

Christian confessions into an overall minority (Schmitz, 2018). At the same time 49.2% gave no comment on their faith or did not belong to any religious community. This percentage includes ca. 11% Muslims, which the city does not count explicitly, calculating from 2011 Census data on migration. Culturally, Cologne is further known as a “fun” city, famous for its carnival and its vibrant and visible LGBTII+ community.

This brief account may serve as an initial spatial introduction into the case. More detailed institutional descriptions regarding childcare will be given together with the empirical analysis, notably so in section 5.2 on welfare providers.

3.4 Participant Selection

Sampling in IE does not follow common logics of representativeness, but instead traces chains of relations and governance encountered in the field (DeVault and McCoy, 2006, p. 32). This does not, however, prevent the researcher from selecting participants with variation of characteristics in mind. In this study intended variation in sampling occurred for two key groups of actors interviewed: childcare managers and parents.

As I will explain in detail below (5.2), the German welfare system is heavily reliant on large non-statutory welfare providers (Wohlfahrtsverbände). Those are institutional relics of the social cleavages of the 19th century. I will show below that these cleavages, especially the religious ones, still matter for slot allocation today (5.3.1). I used official lists of all kindergartens in Cologne to phone up managers and ask for interviews. The process was painstaking and involved many outright rejections. While I found participants from non-statutory providers, I could not recruit representatives of the city-run public facilities. Those managers often explained to me on the phone that I needed the permission of the district youth welfare agency, which the agency itself denied as necessary. My overall impression was that recent industrial action of the public childcare practitioners had resulted in tensions towards district authorities. In general, the local youth welfare agency was not very cooperative, which heavily limited my ability to study their work processes.

Four managers eventually agreed to be interviewed, to whom I am very grateful. The very limited enthusiasm for my questions is likely due to a tense climate resulting from high public pressure on the performance of the local agency that simultaneously has to deal with budget cuts and high personnel turnover. Since I only worked with one district, it was impossible to guarantee those participants effective anonymity. With two of the four participants I agreed to refrain from recording the interviews, and let my notes be double-checked after the interview. That way they had the full control over which statements they wished to have attributed to their person, and which not. Appropriate ethics approval was obtained in advance.

Parents I interviewed varied in the types of family models they lived, their age, marital status, ethnicity, and sexuality. My initial aim was to represent diversity as best as possible, given the small number of participants, to see which mechanisms affected *all* parents *irrespective* of their differences. Recruiting took place in various districts within the city of Cologne. The childcare facilities I visited were located in three central urban areas (Deutz, Ehrenfeld, Lindenthal, Inner City) which can be described as “gentrified”, upper - but not excessively high-class. Two are close to universities, one is in a ‘hipster’ area. Another one was in Marienburg, which is an uptown residential area. One was in Ossendorf, which is a deprived area (“sozialer Brennpunkt”). Professional parents came from these up-town and gentrified areas; parents on benefits I recruited through an NGO (Frauen gegen Erwerbslosigkeit e.V.) came from various poorer areas, often further from the city centre (Porz, Ossendorf).

As announced above, the case study below will focus on professional parents. This focus is in part due to the fact that cultural and policy change are particularly noticeable and directed at that group. But furthermore the data I could gather on professionals was also the ‘best quality’, in terms of breadth and depth of reflections. Parent recruitments happened through the childcare managers I had

interviewed first, through an online board for queer parents, and personal networks²⁷.

Beyond these two core actor groups, I branched out to a range of different actors I encountered throughout my networking and where issues had been left open and I was searching to fill a gap in my knowledge of the local childcare landscape. I have provided a full list of actors in the appendix (8.1). Only a subset of interviews was used for this study in the end. The characteristics of those participants I will introduce in more detail throughout the empirical analysis, so that the information is given where it is needed.

3.5 Learning in the Field: From Work to Time

The ‘problem’ I began to reflect on from the very first days in the field, was to use ‘work’ as a key concept to structure inquiry. Work as a concept is commonly used in IE to draw attention to the multitude of tasks carried out by people in their daily lives, and to the “work knowledges” necessary to enact them (Smith, 2005, p. 151). Broadly defined, work comprises:

“anything done by people that takes time and effort, that they mean to do, that is done under definite conditions and with whatever means and tools, and that they may have to think about” (Smith, 2005, p. 151)

Behind the widening of the category from ‘paid work only’ (e.g. 152) is a political intention within IE, grounded in the *Wages for Housework* campaign that understood capitalism to be sustained by an “underground of unpaid and invisible work that people don’t recognize as work nor as a contribution to the economy” (Smith, 2005, p. 152). Concepts discussed in 1.2 such as “unpaid work”, “care work”, or TSOL have taken up a similar concern (Himmelweit, 1995; Folbre, 1995; Taylor, 2004; Glucksmann, 1995). The practical problem that arose during fieldwork was the inability to differentiate work subcategories clearly and consistently in the interaction with parents. This problem was caused – inadvertently – by confronting

²⁷ I strictly avoided working with people I know personally, but occasionally got recommended to a friend of a friend, or a friend of another participant.

parents with a time-use table that suggested a small set of categories (Table 1). The inclusion of the table into the parent interview guide (appendix 8.3) was a spontaneous decision without much technical reflection. Unexpectedly, this turned out to be of advantage. After a first trial with rather *interesting* results, I kept the table to see if those results would replicate themselves – and indeed – they did.

In comparison to the GSOEP²⁸ time-use survey (Table 2), I asked for commuting times separately from employment to understand how space and transport means mattered to participant's mobility; I grouped sport with leisure; I asked about civil engagement to separate unpaid housework from communal work. Given that I exclusively used the table for parents of young children, education was not a major feature in my target group. Neither was elderly care very common. Next to the GSOEP questionnaire-based studies, German time-use diary data (ZVE/TUS) is available for the years 1991–2, 2001–02, and 2012–3. As revealed by the latest ZVE 2012, German women worked 1h more than men and did 2/3 of all unpaid work (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2015a). In comparison to the previous study in 2001, the overall amount of unpaid work declined. The most notable differences in the total amount of work existed between households with or without children: parents worked 9.5h more each week than childless adults between ages 18 to 64, a difference that is largely explained by 10.5h of additional unpaid housework (incl. care) carried out by parents. Mothers on average worked 7h less in paid employment, and carried out 15h more of unpaid work, compared to childless women. Fathers meanwhile worked 7h paid and 4h unpaid more than childless men (ibid).


Methodological reflections on the reliability of data collection have generally found that housework amounts by women are reported higher in survey questionnaires than in time diaries (Marini and Shelton, 1993). This effect was particularly noticeable for frequent activities, and Mariri & Shelton have suggested that questionnaires may perform badly when it comes to accounting for simultaneity.

²⁸ German Socio-Economic Panel

Table 1 Time-Use Interview Guide

Wie viele Stunden verbringen Sie heute mit: (How many hours do you spend today on:)	Person 1	Person 2
Bezahlter Arbeit (paid work)		
Hausarbeit (house work)		
Erziehungsarbeit (childcare*)		
Transport (Wege, Pendeln) (transport, commuting)		
Ehrenamtlichem o. Ä. Engagement (volunteering, other engagement)		
Freizeit (free time)		

9. What is a typical weekday like for you? How many hours per normal workday do you spend on the following activities?

 Please give only whole hours.
Use zero if the activity does not apply!

	Number of hours		
Job, apprenticeship, second job (including travel time to and from work)	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td></td></tr></table>		
Errands (shopping, trips to government agencies, etc.).....	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td></td></tr></table>		
Housework (washing, cooking, cleaning)	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td></td></tr></table>		
Child care	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td></td></tr></table>		
Care and support for persons in need of care	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td></td></tr></table>		
Education or further training (also school, university)	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td></td></tr></table>		
Repairs on and around the house, car repairs, garden work	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td></td></tr></table>		
Physical activities (sports, fitness, gymnastics).....	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td></td></tr></table>		
Other leisure activities and hobbies	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td></td></tr></table>		

Table 2 German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP) Time-Use Questionnaire (TNS Infratest Sozialforschung, 2016)

This explanation makes sense when one assumes that all hours in an activity are given as an answer, and that housework and childcare are often multitasked. This measuring problem should thus pertain predominantly to women's time-use. Furthermore, patterns in divergences suggest that participants respond in gender- and class-typical ways (Press and Townsley, 1998). For example, with regard to housework women and egalitarian-minded men may overstate their actual hours to (subconsciously) present themselves well. In addition, women are likely to have a more precise understanding of time-use in the household, because they still clearly do the vast majority of it (Press and Townsley, 1998). In the end, the arguably more reliable but much more costly time diary method has generally been considered superior.

Schulz and Grunow have demonstrated on German data that method differences are clearly significant, and that similar aggregate results across both methods are likely a result of academic data processing, in which a focus on averages in regression models neutralises variation (Schulz and Grunow, 2012, p. 629). As the authors emphasise, the phrasing of questions and categories is a problem in both methods, because different interpretations prevent participants and researchers from defining and differentiating activities consistently. For that reason, Schulz & Grunow ask for more precise and disaggregated categories focussing on selected household tasks, ideally in a language that is harmonious to the ways in which respondents perceive their everyday life. Having in many ways 'failed' exactly in those aspects, I believe my research is particularly relevant nevertheless because it critically reflects the *politics* of devising a study design as imagined by Schulz and Grunow. I furthermore can provide a selection of tasks which are particularly important to measure from an egalitarian perspective, and the theoretical framework why these particular tasks are so important. Let me illustrate this in the following reflection on my own methodological journey:

As a first shared insight with Schulz & Grunow, the boundaries of aggregate categories were problematic in practice. Participants rejected some of the categories offered: more precisely, they frequently demanded a clarification of the category *childcare*, differentiating themselves between care (Pflege) and

socialisation (Erziehung). Similar distinctions reappear in childcare practitioner discourses, and comprise not only distinct ideas about the tasks belonging in each category, but also a different value/recognition/social status of those tasks, where *education* (Bildung) is more highly valued than *care*. In a similar vein, the category *housework* was the object of heavy contestation between partners. This fit with a general pattern observed in interviews with both parents present (I24, I25, I28), in which the fairness of the division of work between the couples was repeatedly commented on (see 4.4.1). Some tasks were better remembered and more readily included by participants than others. Subsuming errands, repairs, and gardening (GSOEP) under housework resulted in those tasks being forgotten. *Housework* was primarily understood as cleaning, groceries, and washing. Some parents wondered if care (Pflege) was part of housework, but not socialisation (Erziehung). Activities such as cooking and gardening were occasionally considered, whereas fixing the Internet or doing the tax declaration were ignored. Mentioning those activities often resulted in gendered responses, which involved men ‘perking up’ and pointing out that if those activities counted, their housework share should increase.

Elif: “housework . that never ends, well hehe, well at some point . housework and childcare, that belongs together” (I42, 14:01-15:51)

The association of women’s share of housework with the repetitive, circular, never-ending drudgery of cleaning, as opposed to the occasional success of fixing the Internet, has been reflected as a crucial distinction to make sense of the harmful psychological effects of gendered divisions of housework (Baraitser, 2014; Dixon and Wetherell, 2004; Roxburgh, 2004). My own data is in line with above statistical results (ZVE) that childcare (care: mothers, socialisation: parents and practitioners) and housework (she: cleaning, he: car repairs) remain deeply gendered.

Quantification practices proved to be a particularly interesting dimension for reflection, both methodical and theoretical. Purely quantitative accounts of time-use have also been described as “time-budget research, in which only the factual temporal duration and allocation of particular activities is ascertained” (Bergmann, 1992, p. 103). The table used during the interviews bears some resemblance to the table used in the GSOEP survey (Table 2). The GSOEP table explicitly asks for a

‘normal weekday’, whereas the difference between weekdays and weekends was something I let my participants problematise by themselves. Where the GSOEP asked for hours per day, I asked for either hours per week OR hours per day – whichever participants found easier. Their choice helped to assess in how far the ‘standard working week’ as a temporal institution is still in place for the particular participant. Most chose hours per week, but some – more women than men – chose hours per day, notably those not engaged in paid employment. The verbalised reasoning process how to fill out the table showed that whereas paid work was often more easily known as a weekly amount, housework and commuting was thought of initially in the hours the singular activity took, and then added up over the frequency of the week. The less structured the week was through paid work or external appointments, the more participants relied on such ‘task-estimates’, while a few outright refused to quantify. The quantification of time-uses in hours was easy for most participants for the categories of paid work and commuting. This can be explained by those times being consciously experienced/measured in everyday life. The regularity of these activities tended to make answers easy, albeit overlaps between paid work and commuting (telework on the train) and overtime sometimes resulted in extra commentary that positioned given estimates as averages. These averages were nevertheless conveyed with certainty. The same cannot be said for activities in the home. Here the sense of accuracy conveyed in the interviews tends towards ‘guesstimates’.

Ralf:	Transport. Commuting. That are 5 hours per week for me.
Christina:	That you can say this so easily! ... For me every day is different, for you every day is the same, that is is difficulty.

(I28, 43:20-43:40)

Following the impression I have from the overall data, this could likely be due to the fact that housework comprises a series of recurring tasks – but recurring at different intervals, some of which are scheduled (cleaning the bathroom once a week), whereas others are event-triggered (baking a birthday cake, fixing the Internet). As a consequence housework is visible as many tasks, few of which are ever consciously quantified. In contrast, paid work is often formally accounted for on a daily basis, for example through punch clocks. There the overarching category of

paid work is accounted for in the everyday, irrespective of which particular tasks are comprised under it. The visibility of hours in paid work given in my data cannot simply be generalised however. A self-employed mother I interviewed took longer to calculate her weekly average working time (I22). Trends towards target-oriented pay undermine the visibility of paid work hours. This disempowers employees in conflicts over excessive workloads. The important insight here is not a dichotomy between accounted paid work and unaccounted unpaid work, but the fact that accounting and the resulting visibility of time-uses matters.

Inconsistencies which activities were included make it clear how important the disaggregation of categories is, in survey design or time diary coding. Equally the discussion above revealed the political importance of time-use visibility. Symbolic interactionists have emphasised the power deriving from being able to define an understanding of a situation (Hall, 1972); analogously, Nowotny (1994) points to the power deriving from controlling understandings of time (also see van den Scott, 2014). This concern is expressed in the German concepts of *Taktgeber* (pace giver) and *Taktnehmer* (pace taker) (Heitkötter and Schneider, 2004). (In)visibility is a key factor in reproducing or challenging dominant understandings of 'objective' time, such as "clock time", "world time", "work time", or "standardised time" (Thompson, 1967; Hassan, 2005; Negrey, 2012; Zerubavel, 1982). Alternative temporalities, such as individual time reckoning or family routines might be better understood as subjected, rather than subjective.

Simultaneity in activities provided another quantification problem, insofar as that parents tried to improve the quality of their time-use guesstimates by adding up to 24 hours a day. The most frequent simultaneities existed for parents working from home or during their commutes, and for parents in the home combining childcare with other activities. The last point was particularly important for single mothers, who constantly had to organise their lives in the omnipresence of their children. A similar category problem existed for a father who reported an overlap between free time and paid work, when in his 'consulting days' he spent evenings out with colleagues or customers.

What these struggles over conceptualisations and category boundaries reveal on the data gathering and basic analytic level is that work is a deeply problematic concept for analysis, because it is so normatively charged and at the same time contested. Whereas analysing the meaning of work as an object of research has been highly relevant, using work as an analytic category inevitably seems to come with a lot of implicit political baggage, in which further subcategories (as used in Table 1) can highlight, but certainly not do away with *the politics of what counts, and what does not* (compare *resignification*, 2.2.1). Any effort in time research to make categories consistent should never ignore the political implications and analytic downsides of building a method and database that does not consider the interpretation processes themselves which underlie any time estimate. As I have learned throughout my own methodological journey, for those who seek to study the contestation of temporal understandings (time politics), categories that compel further interpretation are an asset, not a problem.

Shifting my attention to time instead of work mid-study provided tremendous intellectual growth and new inspiration to discuss gender inequality. The effect is, however, that the data I originally co-produced with my participants was structured as an Institutional Ethnography inquiring about work. As such, it did not systematically orient questions to time-uses, nor design interviews with the methodological insights available from time studies. As a result, participants did frequently refer to time, but largely on their own motivation, and in their own terms. The methodological challenge in the transition from work to time then was ‘to talk about heat without a thermometer’, to play on Sartori’s metaphor, that is, to talk about time without relying on conventional time-use data.

“... I do not wish to encourage in the least the overconscious thinker, the man [sic] who refuses to discuss heat unless he is given a thermometer. My sympathy goes, instead, to the ‘conscious thinker,’ the man [sic] who realizes the limitations of not having a thermometer and still manages to say a great deal simply by saying hot and cold, warmer and cooler.” (Sartori, 1970, p. 1033)

In reflection of the tendency for clock-time to obscure other temporalities, already problematised by Thompson (1967), I believe that the absence of standard

quantitative time data in this project, which appeared at first glance as a handicap, proved in the end to be extremely useful in forcing and inspiring me to think time beyond clock-time. A contribution of this study situated at the junction between methods and concepts emerged in the integration of temporal accounts in Institutional Ethnography, enhancing 'work' through a more multifaceted analysis of temporal experience. This theoretical perspective made particularly visible the recurring conflict emerging from a gendered experience of time, which is particularly clear in Anna's case:

Anna: "That [a balanced division of housework] would be very nice. This is also the main reason for the separation. It's going - catastrophe from the beginning, [...] eventually I talked about this with a friend, and she: simply write it down. **Write down how many hours**, then you get a feeling for it yourself . what somehow . is **equally valuable**. And I: really, and she: yes, of course. Ok, and I wrote. And that was very interesting, because . on days where I thought oh, today it was nicely in balance . it was not so. I had nevertheless . don't know . however many hours, and he almost half. And there I thought: see, and you feel it somehow different too. And eventually I took my records to my husband – partner, whatever – here. Hehe, black on white. He blew up: you do such things? That is completely crooked . and so on. So he did not . react well. It would have been nice, if there had been: really? Oh dear . that we naturally have to change. He naturally did not do that. And it is an issue till today. **I have to fight for every free minute** . [...] there is not really an awareness for . em, that this is in imbalance, and that this will be balanced somehow [...] there is nothing, and this is also a reason why I . do not want to continue this kind of relationship." (122, 17:52-19:20, 26:37-27:30)

Her example reveals how important methods of accounting for time spent and the visibility of time budgets is in the shaping of consciousnesses, the construction of fairness and legitimacy in the (domestic) division of work, and the emergence of political agency in 'personal' experience. The analysis I propose in consequence is not a reiteration of time budget research, but rather an inquiry into the construction of categories for time-use themselves, as they are used in the everyday. The target is to understand how social valuations of different time-uses affect the experience of people, their identification, their satisfaction with

themselves, and their ideas about fairness and legitimacy in the relations to others. From there, then, I will 'study up' into the social mechanisms that produce temporal experience.

4 Clocks out of Step: Working Parents and Time Management

In an interview, family minister Manuela Schwesig said it is a pity that in Germany ‘we’ still think that it is never the right time for a child (BMFSFJ, 2015). This statement falls into a broader concern about a ‘family-hostile’ society (‘familienfeindlich’, e.g. Knauß, 2013). Opposing this sentiment, the discourse on recent family policies revolves around the leitmotiv “Vereinbarkeit von Familie und Beruf” (reconcilability of family and profession) (Tiedemann, 2014). To understand current family political German debate reconcilability is a ‘conceptual need’. Passionate public debate is being led over the question in how far a gender-egalitarian combination of paid work and family care is feasible or desirable. A recent study suggest that 1 in 3 of all mothers and 4 in 10 of all fathers desired an egalitarian model, with part-time work ranging roughly between 25–35 hours per week, per parent (Bernhardt, Hipp and Allmendinger, 2016). Reality, despite these wishes, tends to produce a ‘one-and-half-breadwinner’ model, with fathers working full-time and mothers part-time. Simultaneously, many women remain childless, which allows them to pursue a profession more easily as “unencumbered workers” (Acker, 2009). Political perspectives on demography, voiced from a conservative perspective by Birg (1998) or from a left perspective by Streeck (2011), convey that female labour market participation and declining birth-rates since the mid-20th century correlate, and have a substantial impact on national economic capacities and the sustainability of redistribution mechanisms. Framed often as female emancipation, critical voices have pointed out that changes in the division of work have benefitted employers more than women. Making more labour available undermined the social necessity of the family wage associated with the male-breadwinner-model (Knauß, 2015). Increased demands from employers for personal mobility and flexibility, welfare state retrenchment, and a desire for consumption incentivise high labour market participation. This in turn crowds out time for personal relations, family-style care, and time for oneself. Following conservative narratives, the idea of a full-time adult-worker-model is bound to cause stress and disappointment for parents “trying to live two or three lives within a single one” (Knauß, 2015). Such narratives construct the perhaps uncomfortable

‘truth’ that the status quo of socio-cultural norms and policies is unable to resolve a growing paradox between production and reproduction, also identified in the left feminist literature (Bakker, 2007; Fraser, 2016; Rai, Hoskyns and Thomas, 2014).

The family minister’s statement above reiterates this conflict on an everyday level, expressed in the common sentiment that parenthood is in conflict with other aspirations, centrally professional ones. This is particularly the case for female professionals, the most likely ‘we’ of the minister’s statement. Problems reported do not exclusively address *reconcilability*, but this particular discourse (4.1) is central as a way to make sense of everyday life, particularly for mothers.

Disseminated on a daily basis in the public media for more than a decade, it conveys information produced or promoted by the family ministry, Bertelsmann, the Deutsche Jugend Institut (DJI), and other ‘authoritative’ sources. Using parent interview data gathered in 2016 I will point out a number of recurring themes how reconcilability is constructed relative to the expectations raised and criticised through this discourse. I will conclude that the idea of ‘never the right time’ is misleading. As I will show in section 4.2, there are hegemonic temporal norms on the life-course scale of time for when parenthood should be undertaken. Whereas parents who adhere to these norms face a range of challenges, the penalties for acting against the norms, purposefully or not, reveals their institutionalisation in everyday selectivities.

The design of the safety net provided by the welfare state does not just perpetuate a social order, the temporality produced by social norms and policies also impacts social mobility. For carers this implies a risk for downward mobility. Studies of workplaces and fatherhood (Bernhardt, Hipp and Allmendinger, 2016; Reimer, 2015), as well as my own work, suggest the factors causing downward risk and limited mobility are reproduced in the daily social relations between parents, public childcare, and crucially not employers in the abstract, but *direct superiors and colleagues* (Hochschild, 2001, p. 31). These relations have been understood in terms of work cultures, work-time regimes, and work-place masculinities (e.g. Haas, Allard and Hwang, 2002; Williams, 2002). I will conclude that changes in the temporal structure of workplaces are key to resolving the production-reproduction paradox in

a gender-egalitarian and sustainable manner, but that changes in the ‘private sphere’ are just as critical. I will illustrate the rhythms of workplaces in the context of parental leave taking (section 4.3) to highlight how parenthood remains primarily thought of and enacted as motherhood. Tentative incentives in recent reforms to promote fatherhood remain relatively ineffective due to their inability to disrupt the self-fulfilling prophecy of mothers as ‘encumbered workers’. The selectivities in hiring and promotion decisions (critical events, 2.2.3) that follow this generalised assessment of women at a certain age reproduce the economic conditions between parents under which parental benefit policy encourages the selection of the lesser earner (mother) as primary carer.

In parallel, the division of domestic labour remains deeply gendered. A foundational problem in assessing this distribution is the lack of formal accounting practices.

Unlike paid work, work in the ‘private sphere’ is rarely made visible by timesheets or similar. As a consequence, time reckoning is difficult to quantify into standard clock time. This blurriness coexists with a gendered hierarchy of tasks (3.4).

Amongst couples, there is a discernible need to legitimate divisions of labour, which I will examine in terms of “family myths” and “time binds” (Hochschild, 2003b, 2001), pointing to the distribution of time autonomy between different gender roles (4.4). I conclude that the primary carer role is doubly time-bound by the schedules of profession and children. This phenomenon is visible in the conflict working mothers have with fitting paid work into kindergarten opening times.

Looking at reconciliation as a dyad between paid work and parental care is reductionist, because it brackets third-party childcare, such as by grandparents.

Looking at wider family relations and voluntary work, I will address the implications of recommodification on civil society (section 4.4.2).

The gist of the argument is that the increasing flexibility of paid work schedules and a consequent lack of synchronisation to the ‘private sphere’ create perpetual time conflicts for individuals traversing between those spaces. The difficulties continuously reported by working mothers are a prime example of this. The original empirical contribution of this study is a systematic analysis of everyday

temporalities, and the institutional barriers that prevent parents, especially mothers, from planning and realising their lives in more satisfying ways.

4.1 Constructing Reconcilability

As indicated in the introduction, reconcilability (*Vereinbarkeit*) has become *the* leitmotif of German family policy in the early 21st century. This section provides a basic understanding what this concept connotes, and how it is used to promote what academia has called the *adult-worker-model* (Daly, 2011a; Lewis and Giullari, 2005). Before elucidating *Vereinbarkeit* in its current political context, I would like to examine the term on its own. *Vereinbarkeit* (reconcilability) is a variation of the noun *Vereinbarung*, derived from the Middle High German *einbæren* (Duden, 2018c), associated with the Latin concepts of *unitas*; *cohaerentia*; *assensus*; and *reconciliatio* (Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm, 1971). While the most common translation is compatibility, the wider meaning of *vereinbar* includes (Duden, 2018b author's translation):

compatible, appropriate, corresponding, harmonising, combinable, compatible, conform, concordant, agreeable, fitting [together]

The negated term is thus highly appropriate to describe a coordination and legitimation problem, as well as a shortfall between expectations and experiences. *Vereinbarkeit* (in the following: reconcilability) in the current political context conveys a more precise set of ideas. Illustrative are the titles of the last two national family reports issued by the family ministry, which are key sources distributing the reconcilability discourse:

- *Families between flexibility and dependability – Perspectives for a life cycle-related family policy* (BMFSFJ, 2006b)
- *Time for the Family: Family Time Policy as an Opportunity for Sustainable Family Policy* (BMFSFJ, 2011b)

The binary of flexibility-dependability in the former title is symptomatic of a thinking in separate spheres between the working world and the family, which attributes distinct – and opposing – core values to each institution: flexibility with

the working world, dependability with family. The life-course perspective implied in the subtitle can be traced to the influence of an epistemic community including experts from the University Duisburg-Essen (IAQ), DJI, and Professor Hans Bertram, who was the chairman of the commission producing the report. The second report clearly positions *time* as an object of politics to achieve what is considered by the authors a sustainable policy environment.

The reports are relevant due to their anchoring in the parliamentary process (Gerlach, 2014). Commissioned by the federal government every few years since 1968, an interdisciplinary and independent²⁹ team of experts prepares the reports, which are then formally published in the parliamentary prints (Bundesdrucksachen). The family ministry is obliged to publish a response. This induces a compulsion for political consideration. Family reports are considered important in family policy agenda setting (ibid). The extent to which policy reform has occurred in response to the currently eight reports varied greatly. In recent history, Gerlach (2014) highlights the importance of the 1994 report, which introduced the concept of “Humanvermögen” (human resources), framing family not only in ethical, but also economic terms. This reframing legitimised growing investments in family policy in the 1990s. What this report, however, also problematised is the perception of humans as individuals – in labour relations and by the welfare state –, which leads to “competitive advantages” for childless people (Deutscher Bundestag, 1994, p. 22). To ensure stable population numbers institutions ought to be reshaped to better accommodate the needs of carers – otherwise the number of childless people would be likely to increase in a “child-hostile” society (ibid, p.21). The report also pointed out that the West German understanding of “normal work” and “normal family” (male-breadwinner-model) has lost its obviousness and legitimacy with German reunification and commitments made in the process of European integration (ibid, p.20). International comparison between the former GDR (state-led childcare) and FRG (familialised childcare), as well as the liberal British and social-democratic Nordic states have uprooted those certainties. Rankings and

²⁹ Participation takes place on a voluntary and unpaid basis

recommendations by OECD and EU impact the discursive construction of German insufficiencies (e.g. BMFSFJ, 2016). Frequent international comparisons are also made to the Écoles Maternelles and supposed ease of parenthood in France (e.g. Schubert, 2008; Rahir, 2006). Central in this wider debate are demands to reassess the role the state should take to enable the provision of adequate childcare.

In the 2006 report, the role of the state towards a better “reconcilability of family and work” is defined as “helping to make it possible to achieve life plans which include children” (BMFSFJ, 2006b, p. 2). The statement is explicitly framed in terms of sustainability; first, in the context of long-term demographic and economic trends, and secondly in terms of gender and social cohesion (ibid). Germany is represented as a country with a need to “catch up” with the most family-friendly countries in Europe. The political solution is seen as a triad of (1) infrastructure development that supports families in everyday life; (2) new forms of cash support; and (3) time politics (BMFSFJ, 2006b, p. 3).

The most recent family report underscores the dimension of time as an object of policy (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012b, p. 1). Time politics (Zeitpolitik) is defined as the strengthening of “time sovereignty” (Zeitsouveränität) to ensure a “freedom of choice over lifestyles” (Wahlfreiheit der Lebensführung), which is to be facilitated by a demand-based temporal restructuring of public institutions (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012b, p. 1). This includes the *redistribution* of time budgets for tasks of little recognition between the sexes, a better *synchronisation* of disposable time, and time *competences*, that is, the abilities of citizens to *plan* their time in ways that let them realise their targets. Responsible actors identified by the report are the social partners and employers, public social services, but also the legislator with regard to labour law (ibid). The last point indicates the current discursive emphasis on reconcilability as a phenomenon that requires solutions in a reshaping of workplaces, career models, and understandings of performance that actively take into account workers’ social roles outside the labour relation. In that sense one can understand the discursive politics by the family ministry as a soft attempt to assign more responsibility for reconciliation to employers. The following analysis of parents’ accounts of their daily lives is going to bring out these social relations

between the family, state, and capitalist economy, looking at the social division of work and redistribution of time resources, the synchronisation of various schedules and time demands in the temporal coordination of that division of work, and the institutions that impact time sovereignty and the ability to plan.

4.2 Never the Right Time for Children?

Markus: "... it simply . there are, so . it's easier for men, but for working women there is not the right time, it's always the wrong . and so we said we chance it, if-if it happens then it happens" (I25, 12:29-12:56)

What did the family minister mean when she said, as cited at the beginning of this chapter, that in Germany 'we' still think that it is never the right time for a child (BMFSFJ, 2015)? A recent survey suggests that more than 50% of all participants thought that money, independence, and career were reasons that prevented parenthood (BAT, 2016).

Following the logic of Institutional Ethnography, I start analysis with participants' recollections of their journeys into parenthood. During the interviews I asked parents when children had been born, when the wish for a child had first appeared, and how participants had gone on from there. I also asked if there had been something specific about the timing, to what extent parenthood had been planned. I will first discuss responses by professional couples, the group I focus on (4.2.1); secondly I will turn to the narratives of single and migrant mothers to delineate the hegemonic 'standard life-course' from the outside (4.2.2). Looking at 'the others' serves to underline the range of cultural underpinnings, mechanisms, and material preconditions for the norm and the scope of the 'we' in the family minister's statement.

4.2.1 The Right Time for Motherhood?

The literature on life-courses and demography has clearly identified a trend towards later parenthood, relative to the mid-20th century, especially for professionals. A phase of life called "young adulthood" has emerged, which pushes ahead the "rush-

hour of life” (Figure 7) (Bertram, 2012b; Bittman and Wajcman, 2000). Young adulthood is a phase spent in education, often at university, with loose personal commitments, whereas the rush-hour of life evolves between paid work and family obligations. Becoming a parent is the key transition event between those two phases. Discussing the rush-hour of life, Bujard & Panova (2014) differentiate between a *rush-hour of life decisions* and a *rush-hour of family cycles*. The former is predominantly relevant for professionals, and refers to a span of 5–7 years in which key decisions about career and family occur at a rapid pace. The latter refers to the burden of caring for young children simultaneously to securing a livelihood. Only the former is ‘new’ as a phenomenon that has emerged since the 1960. The cause for the rush-hour of life decisions, situated between ages 27–35, is higher education. Longer education periods result in an increasingly problematic coupling of social and biological age, in particular for females: the infamous ‘biological clock’. Increasing health risks for mother and child discourage motherhood past the mid-thirties, which is just the time when motherhood becomes socially most feasible for professionals.

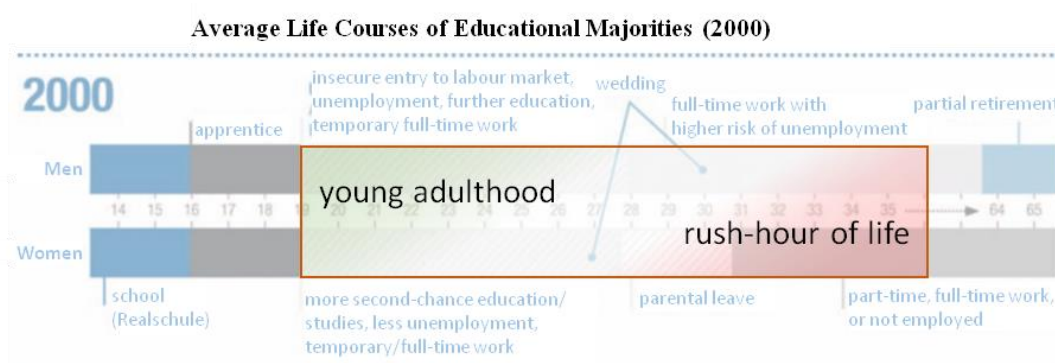


Figure 7 Young Adulthood - Rush-Hour of Life (adapted from BMFSFJ, 2011a)

The most under demographic scrutiny are hence not surprisingly female professionals, who were long presented as the group least willing to have children. This image has been challenged by recent census data, which tentatively suggests that fertility rates for female professionals have stabilised, perhaps even increased, whereas rates for lesser educated women remain on the decrease (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2017c). It is arguably too early to tell, but the fact that parental leave reforms specifically targeted professional women might explain this shift. At the

same it is still clearly the case that fewer female professionals (74%) have children than other females (80%). The causes for this discrepancy have increasingly been understood not as choice per se, but as the result of an ever-repeated delay of parenthood in the life-course (Bittman and Wajcman, 2000; Bertram, 2012a). The combination of educational attainment of partners, where it is socially seen as less acceptable for women to marry and procreate with a man below their own educational level, are often considered as an important initial hurdle (educational homogamy, Diabaté, 2018, p. 82). There are also indications that men place more importance on partnership in life, whereas women take a more critical stance. The phenomena are likely interrelated, and can be explained by women's anticipations of reconcilability problems in a society that continues to produce unequal gender relations (Diabaté, 2018, p. 93). The delay of parenthood to a time when partner and profession 'finally fit' then becomes a slippery slope into childlessness.

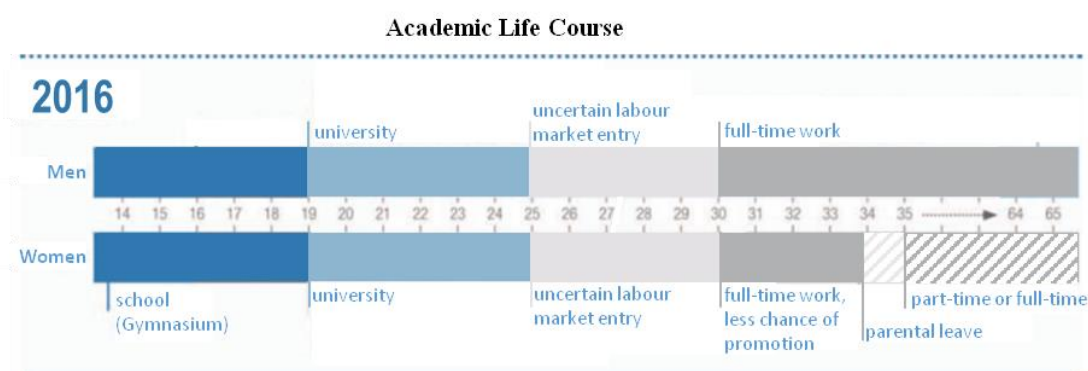


Figure 8 Professional Life-Course

Sibille, a human resources manager and recent mother, explains her own timing rationality in a way that matches the professional variant of the 'educational majority' life-course discussed above (391.3.2): Figure 8 illustrates the for the one-child-variation.

Sibille	Especially the timing when children was definitely a huge topic. Because uh . this is always the issue, in that moment one definitely drops out of professional life . the question is a bit: where does one want to take the career until then, because effectively one already knows that afterwards it's over, at least for a few years . until one maybe comes back to the point, where one says, the children are big enough now, one can work fulltime again, and then the employer says: ok, now maybe there is also hope for the next step . yes
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Nina	And uh . what concretely was for you . was now the decisive point for you to say: I am at this point? . and now?
Sibille	Yes, effectively yes . that was the case, that I thought . well, I first did a bachelor, then worked two years, then I also did a master. Said, good, now I would like to work for another few years, until I reach that certain, well, financial and content-related point . and uh . we moved one more time from Frankfurt to Cologne . that was connected for me with a change of employer . where I said, you cannot start somewhere new, and then somehow say after the probation period you are pregnant. Because you somehow have to have worked for 2-3 years somewhere, so that they – in quotation marks – like to take you back, because I think one always depends a little on it that the employer can.. appreciate one's achievements . so that they will then make concessions (entgegenkommen) for you, when it comes to having an interesting part-time job, or even to be promoted (gefördert) again eventually. And uh . hence that is always already in my head, that I said, you have to somehow work at least 2, 2.5 years somewhere, before it is time, yes.

(148, 43:24-45:35)

Sibille's account accentuates the important role temporal expectations play in the decisions of prospective mothers. The professional standard life-course has a series of semi-set stages. Schooling that permits entry into the university system usually ends at 18-19 years of age, which marks the beginning of the phase of young adulthood. Adding up the time required for tertiary education (three years for a standard bachelor's degree, two years for a master's degree, and some extra time for the occasional shift of subject area, stays abroad, student jobs or internships) 25 becomes a likely age for labour market entry. If two to three years of work experience with an employer are necessary to present oneself favourably enough to expect a friendly welcome back after parental leave, the earliest 'sensible' age for parenthood has risen to 27. Taking into account that initial jobs are often temporary, and switching employers is likely, it follows that parenthood is ever more often delayed into the mid-thirties. Accounts such as Sibille's raise key issues about timing, which I will address throughout the remainder of section 4.2:

- i. Is the right time – the *kairos* – for motherhood predominantly determined by the mother's circumstances of employment?
- ii. And how many children can one fit into the rush-hour of life?

4.2.2 The Wrong Time for Motherhood?

Reversing the question of the 'right time' sheds additional light. Is there a wrong time for motherhood? To that end, I want to illustrate the life of Michelle, who became unexpectedly pregnant, and the perspectives of Lamia and Amira, who recently migrated to Germany from Arabic countries with very different life-course expectations and norms. Both accounts help to see that while there may not be a perfect time for motherhood, there are certainly better and worse timings for it in the temporal structure of German society.

Michelle: "but I also thought now this is not a catastrophe, I was 24 and not 14" (I44, 9:52-10:07)

The effects unplanned motherhood at the age of 24 had on Michelle's life is telling for the question in how far the standard life-course above is socially privileging. The single mother on unemployment benefits described her financial situation as follows (I44, 24:12-24:43): "well it is plus minus zero, I'd say . well . no possibility to put anything on the side", enough to pay the bills and cook. Michelle apprenticed as a fitness coach, but unable to find a job she started a second apprenticeship in speech therapy. She financed the vocational school fees by working "three jobs", but had to quit when she got pregnant. Her inability to save and debts from her apprenticeship worried her:

Michelle: "I feel that I simply have worked a lot in my life already somehow, and somehow have nothing on my bank account . that is frustrating somehow also because . one has the feeling that others . well, go *the straight way* and then somehow . no idea, have a lot of money early on already . that is a little more . difficult for us" (I44, 35:07-35:49)

What Michelle called 'the straight way' is the standard life-course identified above, where education precedes employment, and children are planned once one's position with an employer is moderately secure. Michelle further distinguished between 'professions' and 'jobs' (I44, 51:17 - 53:41), i.e. standard or atypical employment. Becoming pregnant disrupted Michelle's recounted plan to quickly complete her education, work, and start saving money (I44, 2:39-2:55). In her current situation she said she would be happy to have a job at all, and that she

hoped with her daughter in kindergarten, she might be able to work in retail. She would also like to finish her apprenticeship, but could not possibly do this full-time or in the evening, when training is offered, because of the limited kindergarten opening hours.

Several participants, who recently migrated to Germany, had had a child shortly after their arrival. They reported that following the “Arabic” cultural norm of having a child as soon as possible after marriage made it difficult for them to learn German, find an apprenticeship or job, and thus be able to work. Amira and Lamia (I45, 9:08,2 - 9:50,9) told me that upon their arrival in Germany they were unaware of the importance in German culture to adhere to the sequence: education, paid work, parenthood.

Amira: “but nobody said . because my culture . come, quickly children, understands very different [...] Arabic culture is catastrophe . right [Lamia: hehe] . if woman eh . does not marry say: when do you marry? If marries: when comes first child? Comes first, when comes second?” (I45, 9:52-12:37)

Now the time demands of school hours, working times, and simply the ability to dedicate time to learning German without children interrupting slowed them down in realising their goals to participate more in public life, especially in paid employment. Gendered norms were described as more traditional in these families, but women still wanted to work once their children were older.

Local NGOs supporting unemployed mothers posited the inability to complete education and inflexibility of working hours as the main barriers for parents to participate in the labour market or increase their chances at better employment through education (I37, I40). What can be deducted from these examples is that deviations from the standard life-course described above, most notably in the timing of parenthood, have a profound effect on the risk of social exclusion. This is owed to the temporal inflexibility of the education system and the labour market. But it also becomes palpable in disruptions of friendships and other social networks due to a sudden restriction of parents’ disposable free time.

4.2.3 Chancing or Planning? 'When' and 'How many?'

A curious observation in interviews with professional couples was accounts of *chancing* rather than *planning* parenthood. Given reliable birth control and legal abortion, most pregnancies these days occur and are carried through intentionally. But even for prospective parents, planning under benign conditions and with the help of modern technology, the micro timing of conception ultimately remains a matter of chance and uncertainty. This uncertainty carries into the 'critical' first 12 weeks, in which miscarriages are still likely enough so that couples tend to keep pregnancies a secret.

Let us return to the questions posed above:

- Is the right time – the *kairos* – for motherhood predominantly determined by the mother's circumstances of employment?
- And how many children can one fit into the rush-hour of life?

Imke (I24) connects her ability to build a private life with a worsening of her employment situation: being laid off as priestess when the Protestant Church reduced staff. She switched to operative PR jobs, then teaching. The depreciation of her professional role coincides with a reduction of working hours and professional commitment. In the vacuum of additional free time, private life emerges, which quickly leads to motherhood.

Imke: "no, as priestess I had thought that maybe does not even arise as a question, because I was so involved in the parish, I thought: okay, private life . not a must . my job is so much fun, such a calling, such a profession . well, such an important profession for me, which fills out my entire life . I would not have expected it. And basically I owe it to the outplacement, the being laid off, and these . low . operative jobs, that I [...] had much more private life . and then I met him online, and then everything went really fast. And this was the turning-point in my life." (I24, 11:24-12:06)

For Imke and Thomas, an 'exogenous shock' in her life was responsible for the unexpected journey into parenthood. And suddenly the period between wanting and having children became very short:

Thomas: “we got to know each other in January 2010, and L was born end of October 2010, so that is . I will say hehe [Nina & Imke: hehe] . she was a little too early, okay, but ... it also was not an accident, it happened in full consciousness [Imke: yes . it was our mutual wish]” (I24, 13:05 - 13:58)

Both Imke and Thomas give the impression of very ordinary, quite ‘bürgerlich’ people, settled in the Protestant milieu of their affluent neighbourhood. They would never turn heads on the street. He is a manager in bank restructuring, she went from Protestant priesthood, to marketing jobs, to being a religion teacher at school. Yet when they became pregnant, Thomas confessed during the interview – to Imke’s surprise –that his friends asked him if their daughter had been “an accident”.

Having children unintentionally is seen as morally deficient. This also becomes visible in my carefully hedged questions about Michelle’s pregnancy, and if she had contemplated abortion:

Nina	may I ask if the child was an accident?
Michelle	she was not an accident, but it was not planned.
Nina	ok, so a uh . a surprise, which then . [was embraced?
Michelle	[it was then simply a given condition . hehe yes
(I44, 3:56-4:11)	
Nina	was it from the beginning fundamentally clear to you that you want to keep her?
Michelle	yes. I could never imagine that . I can understand that women think about such a thing, especially in such a shock situation, when it is not planned, when it is also clear that one will be alone with the child, but uh . I could never forgive myself, like 10 years later to think, what would have been with the child . because there always come different life circumstances again, settled circumstances with a regular income, and I think at the latest then, right, or when there is a new partner, then one thinks back to the time, what if and how the child would have looked, so . I could never have had the heart to.
(I44, 7:53-8:33)	

What struck me about the second interview sequence is that the term ‘abortion’ never falls. I already noticed this during the interview, reflecting on my own caution to offend or hurt Michelle. Given that she was a very open conversation partner,

who shared a lot of personal memories, she had generally given me no extra reason to tread carefully. Yet I did. What makes the evasion of terms (marked grey) even more interesting is that Michelle brings up abortion at a later point during the interview (I44, 10:15-11:26), when she describes how she was working a lot during her second apprenticeship to cover school fees. Being very busy and losing weight in that time, she legitimates, stopped her from noticing she was pregnant. Only in this second second sequence she implies that it was legally-medically too late to terminate the pregnancy. The question of abortion never posed itself to her in a practical sense, and her construction of pregnancy as “simply being a given condition” makes a lot more sense. But Michelle evaded that part of the story before. Instead she offered a self-presentation in moral-emotional terms, which can be an equally honest construction of what happened – but it is one which allows Michelle to presents herself as a moral agent, a decision-maker, and her daughter consequently as an intended child: *not an accident*.

What separates Thomas’ ‘easy-going confession’ from Michelle’s evasion? Is it the simple fact that for Imke and Thomas, the unusually early conception of their daughter had no consequences on their life that separate them from the norm?

They were two parents. They had finished their degrees. They had enough money and professional status. They became parents in their late thirties/early forties: late-ish, but ultimately in time?

She was alone, unemployed and left without finishing her second apprenticeship, poor, and 24 – by far the youngest in the baby swimming class, and blaming that for the difficulty in connecting to the other mothers who were ten years older. She was also the only mother among her friends, who did not understand that it was hard for her to stay in touch.

I suggest “24, and not 14” was still *too young* for motherhood in terms of social age. Michelle had not reached the life-course point which Sibille deemed ‘safe’ for motherhood. The importance of life-course timing is further substantiated by Lamia’s and Amira’s experiences. I conclude therefore, in response to the first question raised above, that *there are economic (employment) as well as personal*

dimensions of social age that matter in generating the stability and support needed to fend off the downwards social risks of parenthood, especially motherhood.

Adhering to a life-course sequence of ‘education, paid work, parenthood’ is crucial, because these activities often cannot be synchronised well and build on each other as ‘enabling preconditions’. Looking at another couple’s narrative sheds some more light on the gendered dynamics around the ‘right time’:

For Elena and Markus (I25), an external shock like Imke’s layoff did not exist. Instead, the couple used a narrative of “chancing” parenthood, delegating the timing to “fate”. Markus is a CEO of an international telecommunications company, a job he acquired after several years as a marketing consultant. He studied marketing with the army, which meant he had to commit to 12 years in the officer’s career path. The decision to become a consultant was explained as a quick start into a civil career after leaving the army as a relatively old candidate on the labour market. Elena studied law and became a legal consultant in a firm that helps German companies internationalise in the Middle East. While they had been a couple for many years, their busy jobs and regular travel to the Middle East had taken up the central part of their lives. Living in different cities even during their time in Germany also meant that they did not cohabitate until relatively late into their relationship, preferring to “let things drift”.

Nina:	When did the first wish for children emerge?
Elena:	Well, for me not at all hehe [Nina: hehe] [Markus: well, uh...] – maybe you may answer first, you were the driving force after all
Markus:	Yes, wish for a chi- well, as I said, the wish to have children always existed in principle, but there was no concrete planning. Such as now, next year. We tackle it, but rather at some point we simply chanced it . [Elena: hmhm] and then it happened eventually . it simply . there are, so . it’s easier for men, but for working women there is not the right time, it’s always the wrong . and so we said we chance it (es billigend in kauf genommen), if-if it happens then it happens
Elena:	Exactly, that is well said, because . I always knew exactly, I am also – as already said my family is very important to me – but I am not that much of a (davy-type of person), uh, and I always knew that I never will be inclined to . being pregnant, never have a desire for a birth, never be inclined to breastfeed, and the whole baby stuff and whatever, but equally, or . we both knew we wanted children, and consequently be played Russian roulette. [...] we try it now, if it works then fate has decided, if it does not work, fate has decided too. Then it is also okay. Hehe, and thereby the wish for a child so to

	say happened en passant, hehe [...] yes, I also was not inclined to get married . in that regard I believe I am somewhat of a degenerated (entartet) woman, because I find uh-weddings and this whole stuff and fuss, I never found that seductive . but I knew that is the man with whom I am going to stay together, and in this point he is quite conservative-ish (konservativ)[
Markus:	[-exactly, and then we said now comes the child, now we put things on solid legs
Elena:	Then he conspired with my mother hehe [Nina: hehe] if you want to be precise, and the two of them then harried me – well in the friendly way – and told me now I would have to think about the child hehe, and then we were married – quick and dirty – at the registry office. But in retrospect I find that quite good, because it saved me so to say from the whole white uh doves-romance wedding addresses – big dress and 500 people, I was saved from that, therefore I quite like it hehe

(125, 12:14-15:11)

It is important to remember that their interview narrative might not represent their thoughts at the time they actually became pregnant. There are nevertheless a few aspects in how they reconstruct their past that I find telling in the present: Elena identifies Markus as the driving force in a joint decision process. She thereby opens this interview passage by assigning special agency to him (“you”). His answer is held in neutral or shared pronouns (“we”). She voices assent to his narrative. Her subsequent account alternates between pronouns, setting off her own (I/negative) attitude to motherhood against the (we/positive) shared wish for a child. I understand the interaction and pronoun choices in this passage as a co-construction of togetherness-difference, that is, a negotiation how a shared life event is experienced differently, and should be presented towards an outsider as an instance of harmony or conflict: The ‘we’ presents a shared decision, expressing solidarity between partners towards me. But Elena’s use of I also suggests tensions between Elena’s and Markus’ individual experiences of parenthood. In that line of thinking, delegating the responsibility to chance/fate might be a way for the couple to avoid blame, or express their powerlessness to find a mutual ‘right time’. The desire to have children, possibly present to distinct degrees and with diverging temporal preferences between partners, is confronted with an expectation and experience of unequal costs. Elena expresses quite firmly the identity conflict she identifies between “wife/mother” (wedding dresses, baby stuff) and “lawyer”, the role in which she identifies herself most often during the interview. Going beyond

this particular excerpt, it becomes quite obvious that she attributes the higher recognition to her role as a professional. As becomes quite clear throughout the interview, this gender inequality is an illegitimate element that occupies both partners (also see “family myth”, 4.4.1). But the way it is expressed differs: Elena thematises issues in loud outrage, whereas Markus tends towards quiet acknowledgements. Is the absence of Markus’ “I” a matter of guilty conscience here? I cannot tell. The key point to take away is that “there is not the right time” for *motherhood* for professional women in career paths modelled on unencumbered (male) lives, and that this causes planning and legitimacy issues in professional’s personal relationships.

What must be clear about Markus and Elena’s account is that ‘chancing’ parenthood is a matter of narrative presentation, not of action. Their reasoning process suggests a high degree of intentionality and planning. The couple was in a financially secure position, with a long-term partner they felt they could trust, and broader family support. In that sense they diverge quite clearly from the accounts of Michelle, or even Imke and Thomas, above. Another aspect that sets them apart is the presence of a second child. Whereas so far the focus has remained on the first child, this last part of this section will address the second questions posed above: how the rush-hour of life affects the number of children per family.

Markus and Elena have recently bought a house in one of the most exclusive neighbourhoods in town. It is not a villa, or very ostentatious, going by my impression of sitting in their open-plan kitchen during the interview, but it is quite nice and has enough room for all family members, as well as a garden. It is also located down the street from Elena’s mother, which is extremely convenient for outsourcing childcare to the grandmother. At first glance one might assume that the real estate purchase demands for both of them to work. But at another point in the interview, Elena suggests that Markus’ income would be enough to get them by, referring to her income as the ‘play money’ (Spielgeld). This suggests, next to a gendered and unequal economic dynamic, that money is not the absolutely decisive criterion to abstain from further children. Christina and Ralf (I28) are in a similar position economically, but live in a stronger male-breadwinner-model. They want to

have four children (but only had two at the time of the interview). Imke and Thomas (I24) only have one child, but Imke still took a third year of unpaid parental leave. For professional, upper-middle class couples, money itself is clearly not the decisive criterion.

Nina:	Did you always already want family?
Markus:	Yes.
Elena:	We only argued how many children [Markus: hehe] . he:e wanted at least four and I hehe was satisfied with two [...]
Markus:	I believe that eh children are somehow . eventually very very purpose-giving (sinnstiftend) in life, if one is . especially professionally . going on for years, everything becomes a little more relative. Of course . I have made a great project, the great successes, but of course nobody cares about that in 100 years. Yes, or if I buy myself a Porsche now, great, but in 100 years nobody cares about that either. And children are . [...] I always found it beautiful that children, uh, well to pass on values, to . yes, that was always important, and there I think the more the better . that is the multiplier effect on the one hand, and on the other . if things get rough it is family that counts . and the more support one has, the better. We – I, we both only have one sibling, but I would not have minded having had more, that is ... now simply if one wants to live in the city, like in Cologne, and wants property, then . one <u>usually needs two incomes</u> and therefore it also [Elena: yes] . independent from that you don't want to do that (having more children) anymore, it is also currently economically impossible . [Elena: yes, and also-] <u>well, it would be possible</u> , but then we would have to really restrict ourselves (krass einschränken).
Nina:	to have more children, or?
Markus:	Exactly, really restrict ourselves, for one, and on the other hand does <u>my wife need her work</u> .
Elena:	Yes, that difficulty comes on top with three children . with two it is now in my industry – I indulge myself with the illusion that maybe I will be able to switch some day, into a somewhat less clocked (getacktet) working environment, but I believe with three children . well I only know very few, they exist, absolutely no question, but I only know very few exceptions where also the <u>women have a relatively satisfying working environment and more than two children</u> . That is really rare. [Nina: mhm] . well I know currently from my company for example some women already go into assistance at the time of marriage, that is from consultant to assistant, yes? Because they know exactly that as consultant they don't stand a chance anymore (keine schnitte machen) if they have children. And <u>this price I have paid</u> as well, definitely so

(I25, 8:41-11:30)

Elena's desire to work marks the decisive limit for the number of children the couple has. She adheres to the norm of having two children at most, which she explains is the maximum number she encounters in her peer group of professional women. Two children are also the ideal conveyed in the media trope of the 'normal'

nuclear family, and the dominant model of family realised in Germany – for the last 15 years only 12% of all German parents have had three or more children (Engstler and Menning, 2003). In the historic trend, the number of children per household has been declining steadily into the 1980s, and stagnates since. Each child reduces the likelihood for mothers to work, thus increasing the financial burdens on households, most notably through the mother's income loss (Rupp and Bierschock, 2005). Households with many children rely more heavily on welfare transfers, and are disproportionately common in very low and very high income strata (ibid).

More relevantly for parents' sense-making, the normality of one to two children per family is mirrored by the *otherness* of families with many children. As Vascovics (2002, p. 74) asserts, those families might be looked at oddly, or be considered "irresponsible", "antisocial", or "uncontrolled". Families with many children thus face a legitimization pressure from their social environment (ibid). The breaking point between two and three children is for instance marked in governmental categories, as well as in the self-description of the Verband kinderreicher Familien Deutschland e.V. (KRFD), which promotes the interests of "3+" families (KRFD, no date). That the wish for more than two children amounts to 'deviant' behaviour is also visible in Christina's answer to my question how many children the couple wants:

Christina: "hehehe [Ralf: hehehe] four! hehe to be completely honest hehe ..." (I28, 19:24 - 19:31)

Her phrasing and the laughter imply a confession. If one can 'confess' the wish for four children, then it must be possible to consider it 'deviant'. This interpretation, the personal frustration, and everyday experience of straying from the norm, comes out repeatedly throughout their interview (I28). The pressures all parents face tend to be more pronounced for single parents, but also for families with many children. In each case, the ratio between children and carers is higher, which reduces time available for paid work. Welfare transfers do not close that gap.

To summarise briefly, the barrier for parents to have more than two children is constituted in normative discourse. Problematic therein is that professional life-

courses have shortened the 'right time' for parenthood into the rush-hour of life, limited by the need for education and professional security on the one hand, and biological age (for women) on the other. For professional women, 'male' career trajectories arguably leave no 'right time' at all. Expectations towards the temporal trade-off between paid work and care, and the costs of choosing family that are largely carried by women, feature as the central decision criterion between partners. The conditions shaping this decision, and parents – especially mothers – as decision-makers, are the gate-keepers to higher fertility. This observation in turn legitimates my methodological choice to focus on experiences and expectations.

4.3 Working Parenthood and Parental Leave

This chapter will address the early phase of parenthood after birth, which is structurally specific as a period of increased social protection for at least one parent. This phase is constituted through parental leave policies. I will begin with an outline of parental leave legislation in Germany, focussing on the reform of 2007. The central aspect of the reform was a switch from a flat-rate parental benefit to an income-related benefit. The reform also promotes a shorter leave and, for the first time in German history, introduced two months of dedicated "daddy" leave. Policy incentives and cultural tendencies to include fathers more in childcare, however, are limited by flexible work schedules, notably project work, whereas gendered labour market segregation arising from early adulthood decisions onward reproduces the tendency for mothers to become primary carers. As I will demonstrate below, the incentives for shared parenting are too weak to counteract the male-breadwinner logic deeply imbued in German work culture at this point in time.

4.3.1 Parental Leave Legislation 1878-2015

Parental leave is not a new type of policy. The first basic form of maternity benefit and leave for industrial workers in Germany was introduced in 1878 under Chancellor Bismarck, in the form of a three-week employment ban for mothers immediately after birth, together with other restrictions on women's working time

(the 16h day, lunch breaks) that were meant to ensure they could fulfil their duties to the family (Deutscher Reichstag, 1900, §137). Throughout the late 19th and early 20th century, the so-called *Mutterschutz* was gradually lengthened to six weeks on either side of the birth and spread to other sectors. Protection against dismissal during the period of leave was added as part of a larger reform under the Nazi government, which also raised the benefit to normal wage level (Großdeutscher Reichstag, 1942)³⁰. Dismissal protection has subsequently remained an element of all further legislation in this area. After the separation of East and West Germany, policies developed with quite different paces and ideologies.

Unlike the West, East Germany made social equality a state target, investing heavily in the 1950s-60s to promote higher education for disadvantaged groups, including women. State targets to full female employment, however, clashed with targets for two to three children per family. To promote more births, in the 1970s additional policies were introduced, most importantly the 'Babyjahr' (baby year) and extra leave when children were sick, on top of child benefits, housing privileges, and public childcare (Geissler, 1991, p. 182). This, in combination with a right to work, kept female labour market participation high and rising up to 91% before reunification in 1989, and ensured that women had a pension above poverty level (Nickel, 1990). But as in other countries, women in the GDR faced discrimination in the labour market due to their likelier absences from work. This pertained to access to leading positions as much as to industrial segregation along traditional gendered lines. The problem of the 'double-burden' was thus addressed by the state, like in Scandinavian and other Soviet countries, but ultimately not resolved. This shortfall, at the end of the day, must be attributed to the failure to equally involve fathers in childcare.

In comparison to the socialist model, family policy in the West German welfare state maintained a clear male-breadwinner-model. After the stress of the war, family in the West became the refuge of an otherwise collapsed society, "society's

³⁰ Policies supporting mothers introduced at the time must not only be seen as pro-natalist, but also in the context of the war, and the large number of widows and independently living women. Necessity here explains the divergence between Nazi ideology and policy on women. (see Frevert, 1989, p. 207)

last bastion” (Schelsky 1955, as translated by Frevert, 1989, p. 265). The post-war period restored the traditional family norm and patriarchy. The legal framework for maternal leave, implemented in 1952, emphasised occupational bans and restrictions around birth (Deutscher Bundestag, 1952). Working women at the time were routinely dismissed upon marriage, and the ratio of married working women dropped from a third in 1939 to 26.4% in 1950 (Frevert, 1989, p. 267). This trend slowly reversed itself with the influx of American capital, economic recovery, and growing consumerism. By 1980, 48.3% of married women were employed, more than half of which in white-collar jobs (ibid, p.270). The socio-economic shift towards greater female employment, together with the second-wave women’s movement, generated the political pressure on the government to address gender.

The first major qualitative shift in leave policy design was affected through the reforms of 1979 under a Social-Democratic/Liberal coalition government, which for the first time posited a right to time off, rather than a ban on employment (Deutscher Bundestag, 1979). The reform, which allowed six months of *Mutterschaftsurlaub* (maternity vacation) was framed in biological-medical terms:

“The involution of the organs may usually be completed within six to eight weeks. The whole regeneration of the maternal organism however takes up considerably more time. In particular the vegetative nervous system and the hormonal changes in connection with the pregnancy and delivery require significantly more time than eight weeks to reach the state before pregnancy. With the [...] *Mutterschaftsurlaub* it is made possible for an employed mother [...] to commit herself to her child just like a housewife. She is relieved of the double-burden of her duties as employee and mother at least for the particularly important first phase of life of her child.”
(Zmarzlik, 1979, p. 174)

Eligibility was restricted to mothers previously in employment, thus excluding self-employed women (Malzahn, 1985). These gaps in coverage were mostly closed with the introduction of the *Erziehungsurlaub* in 1986 by the Christian Democrats (Deutscher Bundestag, 1985). A key novelty was parental leave for fathers, effected by the gender-neutral phrasing of the law. This, however, only applied to married spouses, as custody otherwise remained exclusively with the unmarried mother

(BGB §1705, outdated). Through the limitation of working time to 20h, the reform promoted full breaks or part-time work for mothers. As Malzahn commented at the time: “gender equality, partnership, and freedom of choice as key concepts of family policy under closer scrutiny of the [policy proposal] prove to be empty shells” (Malzahn, 1985, p. 192, author’s translation). The policy rewarded only families who had the luxury of affording a parent on full or partial leave from paid employment, while enabling conditions for further welfare state retrenchment (ibid). Until 1993 parental leave was gradually lengthened from six months to three years. This trend ended with the Social-Democratic/Green governments (1998-2005).

West German policy promoted a more intense *sequentialisation* of the standard life-course (1.3.2), in which motherhood and paid work were reconciled through a break from paid work in the particularly care-intensive early years of children. While this sequentialisation reduces stress in the family-cycle rush-hour of life, the downside is a slump in family income (Figure 5, p. 43). The opportunity cost of motherhood was therefore particularly high for professional mothers, whereas poorer families struggled to make due on the benefit. Declining fertility since the 1970s suggests that policy was insufficient to organise social reproduction in a demographically sustainable manner.

Renewed reform came into effect in 2007, when the previous flat-rate benefit of 300€ over a duration of 24 months was replaced by the Elterngeld³¹ (Deutscher Bundestag, 2006). Paid for 12 months, the Elterngeld is calculated at 67% of the previous year’s income of the parent on leave, bracketed between 300€ and 1800€. Parents have the right to be on leave (Elternzeit) for the first three years after birth. In the first promulgation, the third unpaid year of leave could be delayed between the child’s ages 3-8, with the employer’s permission (§15(2)). Parental leave can furthermore be taken in part-time up to 30h per week (§15(4)), and entails a right to part-time work down to 15h. A right to return to one’s previous employer in the same or an equivalent job exists³². Particularly controversial at the time of reform

³¹ Elterngeld (parent money) is the benefit, Elternzeit (parent time) the leave right. The terms are often conflated in everyday use.

³² Valid for enterprises regularly employing more than 15 people and employment contracts that existed for longer than 6 months.

was the extension to 14 months of paid leave between partners, if 'the other parent' took at least two months of leave (daddy months). The Elterngeld Plus was introduced in 2013 (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015, current promulgation), allowing a 'stretching' from 12 to 24 months of leave at half benefit (14 to 28 with daddy months). Since 2015 two years of parental leave can be taken in-between ages 3-8, with the employer's permission. One year is in practice often taken when children transfer from kindergarten to school.

What earlier leave policies established is a life-course model of (relatively speaking) sequential phases of work and motherhood, rather than a simultaneity of roles. Since 2006, Elterngeld promotes part-time work for mothers as early after birth as possible. 'Partnership Boni' in the 2015 amendment promote more part-time hours for mothers (>25) and less part-time hours for fathers (<30). This mechanism is created by setting brackets (25-30h per week) for both partners' employment within which the bonus is paid.

Is this trend to a more *simultaneous* parenthood where observers located a 'paradigm shift' towards an adult-worker-model (Fleckenstein, 2011; Seeleib-Kaiser, 2010)? From a formal policy perspective, it appears that policy in the West took a 'reactionary turn' after the Second World War, whereas the East sought to introduce an adult-worker-model from the beginning. The limitations encountered there, and the eventual introduction of the baby year, suggest that a fully simultaneous model of work and parenthood was not feasible for demographic reasons. In the West, the attempt was not even made until the 2000s. The first qualification about the diagnosis of a 'paradigm shift' is therefore that it draws on a predominantly West-German story. While the decade after reunification expanded the Western institutions to the former GDR, to the visible detriment of women, the Eastern dual-breadwinner roots appear to be blossoming again under the current policy regime. The Western-centric paradigm model may hence underestimate the 'international' influence of reunification, policy-learning and path-dependency from the GDR. For example, the 12 months of Elternzeit look suspiciously like the baby year. The 'new' expansion of public childcare for children aged one to three equally resembles the GDR crèche system.

Secondly, it seems somewhat arbitrary to emphasise the Elterngeld reform 2007 as the only important reform. The 1979 reform, for instance, with its introduction of a right to leave rather than an employment ban, seems equally 'radical'. The historic perspective also reveals the layering of policy elements as a longer process. The 'new' elements of the 2007 reform are income-related benefits, dedicated daddy months, and a turning-point from sequentialisation to greater simultaneity of worker and parent roles. Faced with the continuity of dismissal protection, a right to time off, and a gender-neutral phrasing, the verdict of a 'paradigm shift' seems somewhat biased in highlighting the changed elements.

Thirdly, and most importantly, the paradigm narrative can be challenged from the perspective of implementation and enactment. As I will show below, the regulatory incentives of the 'new' family policies quickly come into conflict with other (older) social selectivities when observed in daily life. In the 'messiness' of the everyday, there are delays in the expansion of public childcare due to resource shortages (addressed in chapter 5) (Geis, 2018). West-German urban areas are particularly affected (Rinkl, 2015a). The problems in expanding public childcare to meet demand slows down the progression of the adult-worker-model. As a consequence, ideas formalised in Berlin or Düsseldorf (NRW) often cannot be realised in homes, and parents end up in more 'traditional' family models than they expected. Such gaps, between different paces and directions of change, between expectations and experiences, and between different locations and different people, are something in the dynamic of political change the concept *paradigm* (Hall, 1993; Blyth, 2002) is simply too abstract to capture.

With regard to policy implementation and local enactment, my empirical starting point, it is clear that citizens and front-line workers do not just implement policy in a mechanistic sense. Realising policy in the everyday is not just a matter of compliance or willingness, but of communicating ideas, interpreting ideas, and enacting them in a particular local context (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012). The next section is aimed at tracing which ideas mattered to parents with regard to leave-taking.

4.3.2 Protagonist Enterprises: Sense-Making of Working Parents

Given the openly pro-natalist discourse about demography and skills shortages, the shift in policy towards a simultaneous model of working parenthood appears predominantly economically motivated. This explains the protagonist role of employer associations (Seeleib-Kaiser and Toivonen, 2011). As Beblo and Boll (2014) simulate, the opportunity cost of a child for a medium-skilled woman between age 30 and 45 can be reduced by more than 2/3 if she works 20h per week for three years, instead of pausing work completely for one year and then working part-time the other two years. Put differently, her productivity for the German economy is enhanced by more than a third if she keeps working while having a baby. Parents, obviously, are not necessarily concerned with demographic or macroeconomic developments in decisions how to take leave, thus the interconnected questions remain:

- i. Which ideas inform parents' and enterprises' strategies around parental leave?
- ii. How are these tied up in structural selectivities, and specifically, temporal ones?

4.3.2.1 Selective Policy and Breadwinner Models

It comes to no-one's surprise that money matters in parents' sense-making how leave should be taken. In conversation with human capital managers at two large locally headquartered companies (I48, I52), it became clear that the take-up of parental leave was gendered, but differently so across educational and income strata. Sibille (I48), working for an

	mothers	fathers
upper stratum	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 12 months of leave• Higher PT or FT return• Glass ceiling• loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 months of leave• FT work• Career prospects• irreplaceable
lower stratum	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 24 months of leave• PT or FT return• Few career prospects• replaceable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No leave• PT or FT work, often shiftwork• Few career prospects• replaceable

Figure 9 Segregation and Parental Leave

automobile company, differentiated between higher and lower stratum employees (Figure 9): the former she described as managers with leadership responsibility, specialists such as engineers, and generally “those where one says they have studied” (I48, 16:27 - 17:05). The lower stratum included workers in the production, as well as clerks and assistants in the back-office. For both groups, there was clear gender segregation: Production and engineering were masculine domains, as well as upper management. Back-office areas, such as human resources, legal department, and finance, were mixed or feminine areas, particularly in the lower-end jobs.

The higher a mother’s income, Sibille said from experience, the higher the likelihood of a return to work after 12 months at most. Those mothers were more likely to stay in touch with the company throughout their leave, in order to prepare the best return possible. The reason given for early returns were in part economical:

Sibille: “for most of them it pays off [...] a well-earning woman usually also has a rather well-earning man at home, because . it is rarely the case . most often both have studied, and both have a rather good job, and then it does not pay off with the tax, because both already have the highest tax band, and if you split it over two years, one does not have a large advantage. For someone who earns less, it pays off to spread it over two years.” (I48, 17:08-17:41)

The tax Sibille mentions refers to a joint taxation option for married couples, much discussed in the feminist literature (Dingeldey, 2001; Apps and Rees, 2004).

Germany is one of the few European countries today that maintains this cornerstone of the male-breadwinner-model (Daly, 2011a). Joint taxation allows married couples with sufficiently diverging wage income to each be taxed on half of their joint income. Due to the progressivity of the income tax, this reduces the total amount the couple pays together. Thereby joint taxation incentivises unequal labour market participation, but: to what degree depends on ancillary calculations. In the context of educational homogeneity – and effectively a certain degree of income homogeneity – joint taxation does not pay off for many professional couples. For them, the income loss effected through the gap between their wage and the

67% Elterngeld is more relevant than the tax savings possible through joint taxation, especially when leave is extended to two years at only 33% benefit (Elterngeld Plus).

Summarising the literature on redistribution and Elterngeld in Germany (e.g. Auth, Leiber and Leitner, 2011; Gerlach, Schneider and Juncke, 2009; Martinek, 2010; Wrohlich *et al.*, 2012), it seems uncontroversial that family policy in the last decade has predominantly strengthened the one-and-half breadwinner-model.

Recommodification has resulted in an expansion of (female) cheap labour supply and atypical employment. An adult-worker-model has only been promoted for affluent couples who can afford paid care beyond state provision. In total, Nowak characterises German family policy as an *elite-focussed population policy* (Nowak, 2010, p. 132) that is strongly selective according to income stratum. In its redistributive consequence, Elterngeld is part of a social policy regime that enables an economic dualisation of the society (e.g. Eichhorst and Marx, 2011). This dualisation does not 'just' affect the labour market, but gradually establishes (reaffirms?) two separate classes: the affluent, professional parents with a choice of family model, subject to personal values and with a tendency to a more egalitarian gender order – and the poor, atypically-employed parents, who are under pressure to maximise their income and thus tend to be ushered into a one-and-half-breadwinner-model, subsidised by parental benefits and joint taxation. Where work environments are less attractive, and tax incentives make baby-breaks possible, it is not surprising that many mothers remain in economically-dependent, domestic roles. The same retreat into the home is ruled out, by convention, for men in the lower strata. Where men take up domestic roles there, this is commonly associated with the stigma of un- or underemployment, rather than choice.

Nowak (2010) further makes some interesting points from a Gramscian perspective: Whereas the adult-worker-model gained in ideological relevance, most parents do not have access to or cannot afford sufficient childcare services to both engage in full employment. Nowak identifies the unattractiveness of the male-breadwinner-model for the majority of women as the driving force behind broader assent to liberal-feminist discourses that promote the adult-worker-model. This liberal feminism, Nowak suggests, has been co-opted by the state throughout a "passive

revolution". This provides the adult-worker ideology a hegemonic status, also due to a lack of left-feminist alternatives in public discourse. Demands from the left, in particular the 30h working week, found no space in political discussion. The last point, about the working week, is noteworthy. While I agree with Nowak that in 2018, as in 2010, there are few serious demands for a universal reregulation of working time, a number of small demands and complaints are visible enough that the topic appears to be present, if only as something that 'blinks beneath the surface'.

Sibille (I48) reported that in the last year, for the first time, four fathers in higher positions had retreated from their non-tariff contracts into tariff-covered contracts, because that way overtime had to be compensated. Sibille suggested that whereas a 35h week in the tariff was a 35h week, a 40h week outside often meant a 45-50h week (I48, 28:35-20:05). These men accepted lower incomes in return for the ability to exchange overtime into free time, rather than extra money. They gave the same reason: that it was impossible for them to reconcile family time with hours in paid employment. From the company's perspective, this was understood as a serious problem.

Sibille: "It cannot be that the people who are good willingly give up their good jobs, because they cannot get things organised otherwise." (I48, 27:16-28:31)

Here, too, Sibille made a clear stratum distinction: the demands for more time were a "luxury" of the affluent employees, who articulated their dissatisfaction to the employer. Her company was now experimenting with a series of new measures, including job sharing in leadership positions. This was not a direct result of complaints, but occurred in the context of wanting to promote good workers internally and being unable to fill positions in full-time. "Necessity" thus gave rise to new solutions. Unlike their affluent professional counterparts, workers employed in low-level jobs did not demand more time or flexibility. Very few men took parental leave at all, and never longer than two months.

I concur with Nowak that the liberal-feminist discourse, found in female career initiatives, job fairs, or women's business clubs, is influential for and beyond its

‘viable’ group. In a completely different context, when she was discussing her paid childcare work (KTP) during her own parental leave, Christina (I28) said something deeply revealing about the perception of women in male-breadwinner families today:

Christina: “is does not really save us moneywise, but . but this feeling one contributes something financial [...] one is not just the one here, who . yes, is financed by [one’s husband] hehe, there I would feel funny too [...] that is a stupid reason, but uh . the appearance to others [...] I feel a little bit well . under pressure, that one simply uh . that it is funny for many, that one leaves one’s child at home the first three years and is there for the child, and not working. That is now absolutely not modern. And not mainstream. And this way at least I can say: yes, I am kind of half-working. Yes, exactly. That is for me the social pressure.” (I28, 31:55-33:21)

Statements such as this show how dominant the adult-worker ideology has become. But among economically privileged families, parents *decide* between possible family models. And unlike in Hochschild’s America (2001), it appears that in Germany, 2016, working parents do not extend their hours, but start to seek solutions to reduce time in paid work. This at least is the case for the privileged professional strata who perceive for themselves an economic opportunity to *choose* ‘time’ instead of ‘money’. This group is particularly interesting, because its members have more negotiating power in the labour market than others to realise their own desires, and crucially: these desires do not follow a liberal-feminist or third-way, nor a conservative hegemony – these desires are most often caught in the contradictions and tensions between multiple ways of sense-making found in these ideologies – which ultimately suggests that the current German professional condition of parenthood is characterised by an *absence of hegemony*. That does not stop the institutional arrangement from *producing* a one-and-half-breadwinner-model: it just fails to fully *legitimate* it.

As I will elaborate below, not only the variety of family models lived, but also the guilty consciences reported – in particular by working mothers – belie that the ideal of the adult-worker-model is the unchallenged ‘new common sense’. The legitimisation problem arises from two sources: first, by ideological challenge; and

secondly, through inability to realise the adult-worker ideal in the everyday (to align expectations and experiences). Emotions of frustration, anger, and guilt parents routinely report suggest that the adult-worker-model *as promoted in Germany today* is not hegemonic – because of its inability to pacify these emotions and generate a *harmonious experience* of reconcilability. As I argue throughout this chapter, this inability substantively derives from a lack of synchronicity between institutions.

4.3.2.2 *Career Models: the Vicious Cycle of Gendered Expectations*

Above I have repeatedly mentioned expectations of gendered consequences of parenthood as a disincentive for women to engage in motherhood. Sibille (I48) conveyed the relevance of gendered expectations through the logic of hiring and promotion decisions to substantiate my general point:

Sibille: “[Promotion opportunities are] with certainty a huge topic, because uh . for men, it is not a topic, because one assumes those don’t drop out especially often, and the fewest work in part-time . there it is I believe almost an advantage, if one says this is a nice family father, that means he is also somehow empathetic and has also some social competences, which may even be seen as a credit to him as a manager.” (I48, 18:36-20:30)

Sibille further shared that she knew few women in managerial positions above the level of a team leader, because this was where travel requirements and expectations towards overtime and flexibility made reconciliation very difficult. Female superiors she had encountered had remained childless.

Sibille: “I would say, from experience, that women make career later, because with them one waits [...] if she still has had no children by the end of her thirties, the likelihood is relatively high that she won’t have any anymore, and then one can give her such a post with relative certainty . well then the risk is not so present anymore, that she drops out” (I48, 18:36-20:30)

While direct questions about family plans are banned in Germany, line managers conducting job interviews routinely took a coffee break or similar to ask about moving plans or personal life to gather the information indirectly. *Otherwise gender and age were used as an approximation.* This attitude, she said, was held by the

middle management – the people who had the responsibility to coordinate work and schedules in the company's daily life. Where applicants were assessed as equally qualified on all other dimensions, Sibille suggested, young men were hired – because they were never suspected of demanding leave or part-time work with the onset of fatherhood. Only one male employee, she said, had ever asked for seven months of leave – 50% of what the couple is entitled too.

Sibille: “and that was the first time, that actually a bit of discussion and murmuring went through the company . and one pondered how this can be, and how one can keep such a job empty for a person that long . because seven months is such an eternity . because for men previously no one had ever thought about this, and it was so unlikely, that a man would even do this . that was . that was really the first one” (I48, 14:01-15:12)

At the human resources department, they encouraged more equal treatment in hiring and promotion decisions, willing to try new solutions like double appointments and rethink “which work could actually be done in part-time” (I48). A new female CEO, who was childless herself, but engaged in women's equality, was pushing the issue in the company.

As per the 2007 reforms, parents need to notify their employer seven weeks before the start of leave, and since 2015 employers do not need to generally consent to leave requests between ages 3-8 anymore, albeit they have a veto right in certain circumstances. This relatively short notice period makes it theoretically difficult for superiors and human resources managers to replace parents going on leave. As Sibille suggested, however, prospective parents often inform their employer much more early (about 6 months in advance). Furthermore, the replacement problem only arose for longer leave periods. Especially fathers' short leaves could be easily covered by provisions made for holidays and sickness replacement, according to Sibille. Given the obligation to let parents return to their old or an equivalent job, employers further relied on temporary replacements or left positions vacant. How difficult an employee was to replace depended on internal possibilities to shuffle work, and the type of skills (I48). Engineers, for example, were almost impossible to find on temporary contracts, which meant Sibille's company had to hire them

permanently and shuffle work again once the parent on leave returned, so that both employees were sensibly occupied. Such reorganisation and hiring measures are difficult or impossible for small enterprises (I53, I54).

Reorganisation usually results in conflicts among superiors, parents, and their colleagues over the distribution of workloads. In this personal dynamic, feelings of guilt or fear of repercussions were common among participants. On top, new parents often found it hard to assess how much leave they needed to cope well with parenthood in advance. The personal circumstances of the parents, notably family support by grandparents, and also the variable needs of children create heterogeneous private time requirements and flexibilities. With regard to the length of longer leaves, usually 12 months for mothers, insecurity to employment re-entry times are worsened by insecurities over when public childcare slots are available. Whereas parents apply for a slot usually around the time of the birth, responses from kindergartens can arrive very late. In urban areas, such as in Cologne, a scarcity of slots can result in rejections *despite* a formal right to public childcare (5.3.1).

The gendered length of standard leaves (she 12, he 2 months), including the effects of expectations built on that norm, substantially shapes the gendered experience of leave and the broader gendered inequalities in paid work. These structural selectivities are tied up locally in this self-fulfilling prophecy or vicious circle of gendered 'encumberedness', perpetuating gendered expectations and gender enactment. This results in an ongoing collective judgment of women in their thirties as risky employees, which spreads discrimination in the workplace even to childless women. Uncertainties about when a parent may return, or when public childcare will be available, exacerbate the conflicts between employers, employees, managers, and co-workers.

4.3.2.3 The Family-Friendly Enterprise

As indicated in the introductory section on reconcilability (4.1), an important dimension of the reconcilability discourse of the Family Ministry is directed at enterprises and emphasises their role in reshaping working culture towards more

family-friendly practices. Enterprises need to reflect on family-friendliness due to skills shortages, in MINT but also in managerial professions. Especially the loss of qualified women to family time was constructed as a 'loss' (Figure 9, p.150) over which Sibille's enterprise was engaged to rethink its business culture and organisation to speed up mothers' returns:

Sibille: "We cannot wait for families to organise [childcare] themselves." (I48, 26:07-27:07)

Various family ministers have personally taken part in conferences and round tables to promote the topic (e.g. Provinzial Rheinland, 2017). Large initiatives that generate and promote ideas how businesses can support reconcilability include the business network *Erfolgsfaktor Familie*, founded by the Family Ministry and DIHK in 2006, and comprising more than 6000 members; or the *Wirtschaftstag Familie*, on which awards for family-friendliness are given to particularly engaged enterprises. The award is a joint venture between umbrella organisations of the German economy: BDA, DIHK, ZDH, and DGB (BMFSFJ, 2018; BMFSFJ / DIHK, no date). The purpose statement on the network's website constructs enterprises' interest in family-friendly working cultures through human resource arguments:

- "Simpler recruiting of skilled workers
- lower fluctuation and therefore lower associated costs
- lower costs through parental leave (substitution; reintegration)
- better work climate, higher motivation and commitment of employees
- less absences (reduced number of staff ill, shorter parental leave)
- increased productivity"

(‘darum geht es’, BMFSFJ / DIHK, no date, author's translation)

This discourse disseminated by the network's website connects productivity and efficiency gains with skills shortages. Employee demands are described with a focus on the ability to *plan* working time and *reliable schedules*, a rather noteworthy fact from a time-theoretical perspective. The website authors further emphasise that family-friendliness and flexibility *complement* rather than *contradict* each other.

Working time models are an important topic in the discussion how flexibility can benefit families *and* enterprises. Next to the usual time models (part-time, flexitime with or without core times, home office, job-sharing) a relatively new model is the “Lebensarbeitszeit”, which functions as a long-term time account in which employees can ‘save’ and ‘spend’ time. In other words, they can expand and reduce hours in rhythm with their life-course needs. While interesting as a model capable of reducing stress in the rush-hour of life, the downside of such models on the enterprise-level is the necessity to remain with one employer for a very long duration. The time ‘saved’ cannot be moved along to the next employer. In times of greater job insecurity, this model’s applicability appears rather limited, unless such time accounts were institutionalised on a scale large enough (national, or even international) to treat time like a universal currency.

Job-sharing meanwhile is difficult to organise in the context of *Präsenzkultur* (also see 4.3.4): a preference for workers to be on site during business hours. The prevalence of *Präsenzkultur* in Germany becomes visible in the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS, 2016), under the item: “Is it difficult to take an hour or two off to take care of a personal or family matter during working hours?”. Next to several Eastern European countries, Germany does particularly badly on this indicator, even though Germany has fairly benign labour conditions in most other categories, such as total labour time (Figure 10).

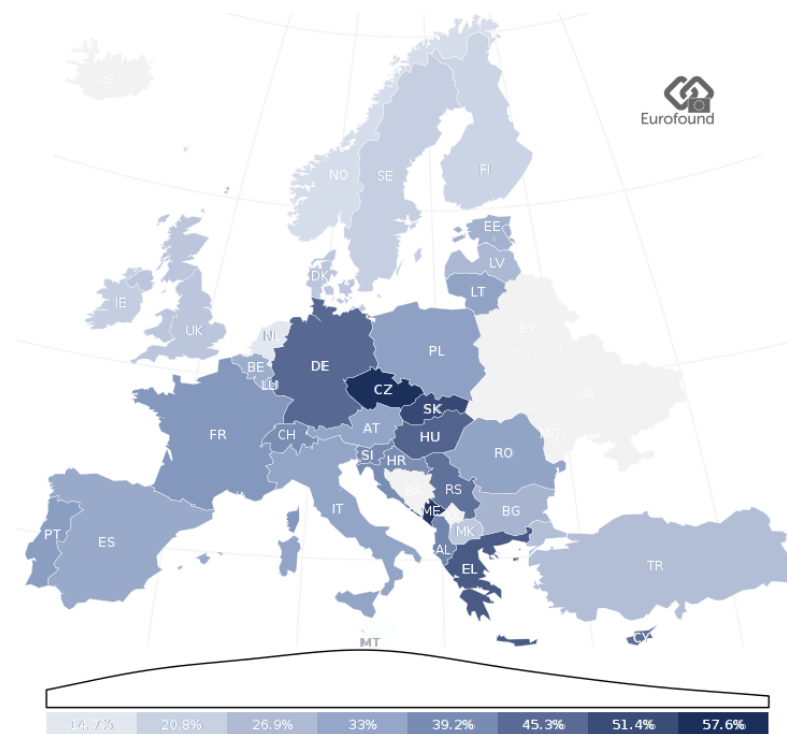


Figure 10 Präsenzkultur, taken from EWCS 2016

To give an example: two mothers have a Kindergarten slot (say, between 7:30-16:30). They can both therefore work the 'morning shift' on the job they want to share. Their employer, however, wants all regular hours of the working day covered (9:00-17:30 at least). Hence the mothers have to share the 'afternoon shifts' as well, for which they need to organise extra childcare. The afternoons are usually the difficult time to organise. I will explain the policy constraints on kindergarten opening hours in section 5.3.2. This small example illustrates that the *Erfolgsfaktor-Familie* network's claim of a complementarity between flexible working times and family friendliness is not theoretically impossible, but practically very conditional on a range of factors that are not addressed by the network's ideological message. This divergence between ideology and reality is picked up on by parents when asked after family-friendly measures in their workplaces.

Ralf: "well enterprises . I mean every enterprise presents itself (schimpft sich) as family-friendly, and every enterprise today is certified somewhere that it is family-friendly and so on, but at the latest when they let themselves be certified it gets dangerous. Hehe, right, so there is not a lot of support. Well there is the wage and that's it." (I28, 33:26-34:08)

Participants either were not covered by measures other than working-time models, or found them difficult or impossible to access. Working-time models themselves, interestingly, with the exception of parental leave, were not considered family-friendly measures in the interviews. I believe the right to part-time was simply taken for granted for mothers, and therefore not discussed. This indicates that the meaning of 'family-friendly measure' is understood by employees more in terms of parent-specific offers, and less in terms of universal offers, like flexitime or part-time.

Larger enterprises these days tend to have some specific offers for parents, which are not part of a working time model. These comprise for example parent-offices, when parents spontaneously need to bring a child with them, or emergency services when the child's regular carer is suddenly unavailable or the child sick. As Thomas suggested, awareness and use of such offers is low in his company. A parent-office existed, but it was "one for [...] 9000 employees" (I24, 25:55-27:19). While he had once considered using that office, he described it as a "last solution". His superior, herself childless, had not been aware such offices existed, and apparently struggled with the idea when he mentioned it to her.

The most prominent and sought-after solution for reconcilability in workplaces is the company kindergarten (Betriebskita). Childcare facilities on work sites were common in the GDR, but virtually non-existent in West Germany. In NRW, the only differences between a Betriebskita and a regular kindergarten are (1) that the opening times are adjusted to the company's need; (2) that the company has a say in how slots are allocated, most often exclusively to employees; (3) and that the company pays around 9% of the operational costs, as well as part of the initial investments. The Betriebskita is then usually run by an established external provider and subsidised by the government like any other public kindergarten. Respectively, governmental regulations need to be upheld and the company cannot make any profit from childcare. A Betriebskita is thus a non-profit entity that enterprises maintain for employer attractiveness and the general reasons for family-friendliness already stated above.

The current reality is that while Betriebskitas become very popular, high regulation (health & safety, etc.) makes them difficult to set up. Furthermore, the model is only functional if the employed parent takes care of the childcare commutes. For example, Markus' company has a Betriebskita, but only in the town he works in, Düsseldorf (I25, 27:56-28:24). Given that Elena had reduced to part-time to coordinate her work within kindergarten opening hours, and the children were already enrolled in a kindergarten, the task fell to her in Cologne. This decision in the couple's division of work preceded Markus' job change to the current company. Markus commutes to Düsseldorf by train for one hour approximately, which would be difficult to do with two small children. Also, once acclimatised in a kindergarten, it is not advisable to move children around. Under the given circumstances, the couple cannot benefit from the Betriebskita.

The underlying tendency is that large enterprises have Betriebskitas in their headquarters, particularly where their most expensive staff is located, and less so in smaller branches, also because the predictable number of children there is too small to warrant the investment. An alternative to Betriebskitas are 'contingent slots' (Kontingenzplätze). Those are slots a company can reserve against a fee in a public childcare facility, for whose allocation company employees get preferential treatment. This opportunity also works for medium-sized enterprises and branches and has the advantage of less fixed costs and investments in set-up.

The great advantage from a parent perspective is the high potential of Betriebskitas to resolve the synchronisation problem underlying reconcilability. Distances and opening hours in principle cease to be a problem, when childcare and paid work happen in the same place and same rhythm. The possible downside is that only one parent is effectively capable of bringing the children into the childcare facility, unless the family home is very close to the workplace. Frequent job changes would lead to children having to switch kindergartens very often, or the synchronisation advantage would be lost. This is inadvisable from a pedagogic perspective. What such initiatives presuppose is an orientation of enterprises to a standard of 'encumbered' rather than 'unencumbered' workers. In the current and likely future

context of skills scarcities, this degree of social engagement by enterprises is thinkable.

4.3.3 Taking Parental Leave: Gendered Experiences

The standard of the 'unencumbered' life-course to enable a full-time career model of work for the male middle-classes has long been established in the literature (e.g. Hochschild, 2003b, p. xiii). What this model entails is the junction of different time scales: the life-course, and the days, weeks, and months of the 'everyday' of professional life in which workers compete for recognition and advancement. Women, since the onset of the industrial revolution, have struggled with the double-burden. Their responsibility for the everyday of the 'private sphere' has left them unable to compete on equal ground with men in the everyday of 'the public', resulting in long-term dependencies and inequalities visible on the life-course scale (2.3.2). The following sections are dedicated to untangling some of the junctions between those time scales. These junctions can be found in critical events, like hiring and promotion, as discussed above. Sticking with the topic of parental leave, the next critical string of events I want to discuss are: asking for leave, the experience of 'dropping out', and the return to work.

In *What a Difference a Day Makes* (1998), Glucksmann describes the different styles of recollection in the oral history of working women (see 2.3.2). Therein, she identifies a distinction in how life phases are referenced temporally, between industrial textile workers who orient to world history, and casual workers, who orient to personal life events, such as marriage and the birth of children. Glucksmann explains that for the latter, these events had a much more life-changing effect, placing them outside of the formal labour market and into the neighbourhood community of female life, whereas the women who maintained their work in the mills experienced adult life in greater continuity. I was reminded of this when analysing the narratives of parents about the consequences of birth, and how the event had a much more life-changing effect on mothers than on fathers. This becomes visible in the emotional conflict addressed by mothers, whereas fathers' accounts were much more factual. Fathers remaining in full-time work

discussed change in terms of coming home earlier from work, or in the form of switching full-time jobs to reduce working hours to something closer to the 40h week. But becoming a father did not disrupt their work life in any radical ways. The opposite is the case for mothers, and the next section is dedicated to examining their recollections of these changes. For purposes that will become obvious, I have separated mothers in career-track professions, and what I call ‘non-career’ professions.

The simple point I wish to make throughout the subsequent analysis is that parents include income calculations in the present, and income expectations in their future, into their negotiations about who takes parental leave. As already mentioned in the previous sections, this demonstrates empirically that gendered expectations and experiences in the workplace act as causes for leave-taking decisions that further cement inequalities between partners – even those who profess egalitarian attitudes. It also shows that economic rationalities are not ‘universal’, but embedded in personal histories that explain individual constructions of what is important.

4.3.3.1 Non-Career Mothers

Among my female upper-middle class participants, Christina exemplifies most clearly what I am here calling the ‘non-career’ path. She is a primary school teacher on a civil service tenure track (Beamtin). The latter status guarantees her employment for life. As she put it:

Christina: “I have of course the luxury that others don’t have, I have tenure, right, the job is simply kept free for me [...] well I can, if I want to, care for the child for three years, well, and then . the job is passed on again” (I28, 5:44-8:00)

The only drawback, professionally, that she anticipated from having two and planning four children was that she would need to redo her extra qualification in psychomotoricity, which she had dropped out of during her first pregnancy (I28, 23:56-24:20). Teachers in Germany usually do not fundamentally advance from their jobs. While pay grades change with experience, the only obvious promotion is

to the role of principal, which was described by participants as undesirable, because it just meant 'a little more pay for a lot more work'.

Unlike Christina, Imke had ended up teaching religion due to her layoff as a priestess. I already discussed above how she experienced the change in work intensity as the decisive aspect that enabled a private life. With regard to parental leave, Imke suggested that teaching also made it easier for her to remain home with the child, because it had never been her intended profession in the first place (I24, 48:10-48:23). The lack of advancement opportunities based on performance, together with a relatively lower commitment to the job for Imke, worked in both mothers' cases together with the higher wages of their respective husbands. The consequences of dropping out of their regular professions, however, left a worse than anticipated impression on both mothers, for somewhat different reasons.

For Christina, the conflict emerged between her own ideal of a more traditional, domestic role, and the lack of recognition she experienced for that choice. Her case makes the structural dominance of the one-and-half-breadwinner-model quite visible from the 'conservative' end. For Imke, who held a much more egalitarian and profession-oriented attitude, the inability to realise her ideal illustrates the structural dominance of the one-and-half-breadwinner-model from the 'egalitarian' end. Among their expectations (Christina)/ experiences (Imke) of returning to work two dimensions stand out: timing and direct superior's attitudes.

Christina: "Well my child was born in summer, and that way I could nicely finish the school year, and so on, school-technically that was great . yes, how it happens . right, but well I have a very supportive principal, who keeps the job free for me, to which she is legally obliged, and . but I notice that she does not do that unwillingly, but happily . uh, and well she surprisingly also has, even though this is not the mainstream, a similar attitude like me, she thinks it's good, yes, that I spend such a long first time with the children and don't drop off the child after one year already . so she supports me in that." (I28, 30:53-32:07)

Whereas Christina has her superior's support and lucky synchronisation between the school year and the birth of her child (see 5.3.3), this is not the case for Imke. Her child was born in October, and while she would have preferred to take two

years of leave, she returned early to the start of term in August. According to Imke, her employer could not have guaranteed her re-entry during term time (I24, 16:49-17:24). Further conflict arose, because the school wanted her available for all hours of the day. Whereas part-time work was possible for a reduced number of hours, those hours could be anytime during the week between 8:00 a.m. and mid-afternoon. Including commuting times, this availability was not possible within public childcare opening hours. The leave break had a further clear disadvantage: Imke could not return to her previous school, where she had been comfortable, and which had only been 15min away from their home. The couple had purposefully moved to that area in Thomas' parental leave time to optimise commuting for her, while Thomas accepted the longer commute (ca. 1.5 h) to work in the next city. That way, Imke was supposed to be able to reconcile work and childcare. With the forced change of school after the break, Imke's commute rose significantly (I24, 22:51-24:34). Furthermore, she experienced conflict with the principal there (I24, 9:19-10:25).

In summary, it becomes clear that even in 'non-career' professions, such as school teaching, employees are expected to be present and available to a temporal extent effectively not covered by public childcare. Even for those with guaranteed return rights into a very similar position, shifts in the work environments after 'dropping out' presented a loss, in Imke's case an unanticipated one, because she did not know she would have to switch schools when she took leave. In the spatiotemporal arrangements between home and work places, even these relatively small changes lead to substantial problems – which reveals the diminished mobility of parents in active carer roles. Where employment is structured by fixed schedules, such as in schools or universities, but also for shift work, a lack of synchronisation with public childcare is deeply problematic (5.3). Mismatches between such schedules make up a substantial gap in the ECEC system, which parents have to bridge somehow – most often through familialised care: mothers, or grandmothers (4.4.2.1).

4.3.3.2 *Career Track Mothers*

For the majority of mothers, dropping out of the labour market for 12 months of parental leave is the norm. Returns afterwards commonly happen in part-time. Only one of my participants did not take parental leave, and this is not surprising, because Anna is a self-employed freelancer. Whereas parental benefits in theory also cover this group, risking the future of one's business can effectively prevent self-employed parents from making full use of the policy. In many ways the paragon of the 'active individual worker' promoted by the third way (Giddens, 1998), Anna reaches her limits trying to mother and work:

Anna: "professional restrictions . well that was . was linked to . afterwards (the birth) I was actually in completely exceptional circumstances, but I also did not know that yet. [...] after three months I was already recording the first audiobook, and did that . yes, pedagogically, because I – well, don't fuss, this will go on, hmhm . and then at some point there was overkill after half a year, I had . a nervous breakdown every day, and nobody could make sense of what was happening, and only then all of this was processed . so to say, and uh, that means the infertility treatment and the birth, what happened . afterwards . was, for the profession so to say not beneficial. Which means I had to cancel a lot . uh . shooting days and radio, well . I did try to do a few things . uh, yes . and then came the decision at some point that I also don't want to shoot anymore, and only want to concentrate on the radio, because I also recognised: that is far too much, I just can't – this simply does not work." (I22, 0:08-2:31)

Anna explains the gradual process of realising in these early months that she was unable to reconcile motherhood and work with her own mental health. This needs to be put into context with her equally freelancing husband, and problems in the marriage. Financial insecurity was a key issue for Anna; a second issue was a lack of close-by supporters she could trust:

Anna: "I would have wished, in the beginning . I would not actually have needed this from 9 to 5 o'clock . that the child is gone, but rather somebody . who cooks, does the housework, who uh . buys clothes for the child. Who so to say helps a lot with all the organisational things, and uh . would also go to the playground and say: you now take a bath . you . now do something for yourself, read a book . uh . where on . feels,

they can really take responsibility . that was my main wish. And this environment . that could have been my parents, my sisters, uh [...] the family really . but then I would have had to drop out of the job for a while, which I would do . now in retrospect I would do that . would say, for two years I'm out of here – and uh . afterwards I come back . and that has something to do with money. If one . or with the freelancing ” (I22, 4:52-6:50)

But Anna's mother and sisters are in a different federal state, too far away to help much in the everyday. Anna's mother was a housewife, who raised four children while the father earned the money. Anna's grandmother was deeply involved with the Protestant Church, caring for others in the parish on top of her own children, while her husband drank away the money (I22, 11:08-14:10). The same role model in two generations: doing everything for the husband, for the children, “this is fulfilment”. But as Anna's mother begins to recount as an old woman, high family obligation came with the certainty she would be provided for. Respectively, Anna describes her father as a man living in dichotomy: on the one hand, his daughters' education is vitally important; on the other hand, “women belong in the family with the children, men go to work” (ibid). Both her older sisters and she live a different model.

Anna: “but I have . noticed . in the first years what inner conflicts there are, with those very images . what all hits one, and how difficult it is, well it was extremely difficult for me: what kind of mother am I? am I a Rabenmutter³³, oh my god, I go to work – but I have to earn money, hehe, all the time really . it was . was really difficult” (I22, 11:08-14:10)

When I asked Anna if she had ever experienced similar role conflicts in her professional life, she said “absolutely not”.

These passages are brimming with clues about gender: Something that particularly struck me was Anna's wish for someone to take responsibility to organise the household. I am reminded of Hochschild's comment in the preface of *The Second*

³³ Derisive media trope of a working mother, defined as “loveless, hard-hearted mother, who neglects her children” (Duden, 2018a)

Shift (2nd Ed.): “As I repeatedly heard career women in this study say, ‘What I really need is a wife.’” (Hochschild, 2003b, p. xii). A *wife*: someone who organises the household and takes responsibility, so that somebody (a husband, or Anna herself) can lean back and relax – at least once in a while?

The source of Anna’s problem, as she constructs it, is her initial decision to keep working while becoming a mother, which results in an “overkill” of obligations. The reason for that decision is primarily money. Two things in Anna’s context are key to understand why money is so important to her: first, her mother and grandmother were dependent economically on their husbands, and thus felt unable to separate even under conflict:

Anna: “*then separate from dad* so my older sisters, and my mother said very clearly: yes but I . I can’t work anything, how should I do this?” (I22, 22:55-26:29)
mock yelling

Deterred by their experience, Anna has insisted on earning her own income. Secondly, she and her husband have separate finances. She wanted it that way in the initial period of their relationship, which hurt his feelings (and maybe his sense of masculinity?). When she would have preferred shared finances after the birth, he denied her wish. Due to (from her perspective) lacking involvement in housework and monetary support, they were divorcing at the time of the interview. The contrary needs and wants Anna perceives throughout their relationship reveal the conflict between different ideas of family, especially as an economic relation. Anna’s example reveals both ideological and functional conflicts (possible organisation of work, money as a hard constraint) in the joint coping with everyday parental and marital life. But this case, as one in which parental leave policies do *not* really take hold, also exemplifies how a lack of effective family policies contributes to family crises and personal breakdowns. Perhaps most importantly, it indicates the limits of the feasibility of an adult-worker-model based on the temporal standard of ‘unencumbered’ workers.

A different example of a mother seeking to maintain a career is given by Elena, who is Anna’s opposite in the sense that she had a lot of support, private and public.

Elena took parental leave for both of her daughters and kept her job as a legal consultant with reduced hours. What enabled her to do so is a combination of parental leave, part-time work and public childcare, together with telework and a reliable grandmother living down the street.

Elena: “after the second child I started working part-time [...]now I work 30h, in reality maybe more like 40h, so full-time after all, but uh – fulltime, so I’m a lawyer, in our industry, that is in consulting, fulltime is more like 60 to 70h, and not 40. Respectively I am for security reasons hehe still on an 30h, so that I can’t be asked for 60 to 70. That, uh, that’s just project work (Projektgeschäft). That means . sometimes I have insanely much to do, predominantly I have insanely much to do, since we all have increasingly less staff for ever more tasks. Bu:ut, uh, sometimes there are stretches where there is less to do, and uh, I have a – that is the thing that gives me somewhat of a benefit now with the children – uh, early on I have already designed my whole office in principle, my whole activity was designed so that I can work from any and everywhere, and – because I was travelling a lot on the job. And today I can just log in again in the evening, I have all my client data electronically available, that helps a lot.” (I25, 3:25-4:32)

For both of her daughters, she signed up for two years of parental leave, but effectively only took one year each time (I25, 26:58-27:44). She recounts having a bad consciousness in the meeting with her boss in which they negotiated her return from the first baby break, because she was “already pregnant again” (I25, 25:17-26:46). Elena said her boss was “a cool type”, who had two children himself and “a good sport about it”. In return for the renewed inconvenience, however, he asked her to return in full-time for the five months up to the second birth, in which Elena’s mother “thankfully” stepped in to care for the first child. While that arrangement “worked well” on the short term, Elena says it was too exhausting as a long-term solution. After her second daughter, Elena returned in part-time, as described above. But part-time work led to the limit of her advancement in her company, the famous *glass ceiling* (Acker, 2009).

In terms of a ‘path-breaking’ life-course event, Elena describes the experience of becoming a mother for the first time and parental leave as such:

Elena: “even though I was not even that young then, but . I was the first who had a child, and I rather suffered from that in the beginning, because my lifestyle changed so drastically: before always about and on the job, and everything else then ... partner, also a serious partner, but he could easily occupy himself, also living in a different city. All my female friends pretty much did it the same way, to be honest. Then I was – at one blow – very down to earth [...] uh, and for a while I really had the feeling that at one blow I don’t have any friends anymore and no hobbies anymore . and pretty much only care for the baby . and uh, yes, I think one should also say it that way, the first – one and a half years, after one and a half years our second daughter also arrived slowly, we also moved quite a few times . well, that was a pretty tough time . which I don’t need again . [Markus: hmhm] . since a year it works well, hehe, we have a relatively furnished house, and the girls are big enough, that is beautiful . the first years, then I was so - well, I felt alone” (I25, 15:47-17:20)

The primary feeling mothers recalled in effect of a sudden disruption of their lives was loneliness. This affected Elena, Anna, Imke, and Christina as well, if to varying degrees. The stark difference is that fathers who took at most two daddy months of leave did not report such experiences. They talked about children being exhausting, and family conflict, and having not enough time for children or themselves – but they did not ever report the kind of rupture that mothers routinely experienced, nor the frustration and isolation of staying home. Overall, what Anna’s and Elena’s accounts exemplify is the strain an active work life takes on active carers. Their situation indicates the limits of simultaneous roles under the current policy regime, the nuclear family, and workplace culture: in other words, the unhealthiness of an ‘unencumbered’ adult-worker norm. But crucially their experience of loneliness also points to the sense of exclusion women experience when ‘confined to the private’ in a world that revolves around the ‘public’.

4.3.3.3 *Career and Fatherhood*

As a third and last dimension of experiencing leave, I will now turn to father's narratives:

Thomas: “ ... and eh, for me, I'll put it that way, that was also at my old employer, despite the understanding of my boss, I think if I'd turned up with **part-time . that would not have worked** . that certainly had been quite conservative, even if already, don't know, ten years ago a department head, well directly below board-level, had taken parental leave already, but at the time that was already revolutionary . and when I turned up with the topic – ok, that was pretty short-term had we thought this out, well two months of parental leave . that then led to that eh at 7:00 in the morning **I was permitted to meet my boss** for breakfast . well that was a... hehe [Imke: how so?] he was somewhat . no, [my boss] was a bit baffled and there was **a 'need to talk'** – don't you remember? [Imke: nah, I don't know this] there I went with him in the morning, into his, when he came from Munich in the morning met in the morning in his hotel, for breakfast [Imke: to discuss this?] yes, and then it was after this it was ok, there **we spoke it through how it can function**, to be out for two months, and **went through the projects**, and then he later saw, ok, that works. It also worked with the whole environment, I had told those, and it was, there were another two people who worked (liefen) . it was not a question, that this would function. But for starters **he needed to digest this**. That-that **did not quite fit into his image**. But he then got it . that went well (es lief) – that was then also **respected**. I was even properly disconnected from the employer, from the network. So, the blackberry was gone . well it was there, but my email account was switched away . so that was a clean process – once it was assimilated by him. That went quite quickly, that is we knew each other long and well enough . I believe for other people that would not have worked (wäre das nicht gelaufen).” (I24, 17:52-20:06)

The passage above illustrates in one narrative the key dimensions of fathers' reasoning and experiences I encountered in all interviews, and that match the public discourse, Zeitgeist, or 'common sense' I perceive as a local. These dimensions are:

- An expectation of part-time work as impossible in one's position
- Anxieties towards superiors regarding one's wish to take leave
- A need to organise paternal leave within company schedules (e.g. projects)
 - Non-conforming fathers as singular cases or 'exotic'
 - Certain adjustments in working habits and weekly schedules

(o quotes below)

Thomas recounts the event described above as an instance of planning and legitimation, an interaction that brings about a confrontation and adjustment of expectations about the future. I inquired further (I25, 20:18 - 21:42), asking after the argument he presented to his superior. Thomas replied it was based on demonstrating that the externally-visible performance of the enterprise would not be impacted. He said he had purposefully avoided a legal argument based on his right to parental leave, aiming to avoid a "formal conflict" with his superior. Compared with other interviews, the need to legitimise leave with respect to workloads, notably project schedules, appears a common feature amongst male professionals. The pattern of referencing to rare male colleagues who acted as pioneers in taking leave, and were considered 'exotic', also reappears. In total this suggests that active fatherhood runs into conflict with working cultures that uphold the unencumbered worker norm, demanding the availability of the worker according to the flow of business (just-in-time management, Präsenzkultur, etc.) (Reimer, 2015).

Ralf: "when I applied [for a different position] internally . I have said that well I would like – I apply here, but I still want to take two months of parental leave, and uh my department head [female] tells me something about the best family-political decision ever, would be annoying for her, but one hand to accept all this and so forth, so at least there were no negative consequences, even though in that situation there could have been consequences" (I28, 26:26-27:43)

The discretion and power of direct superiors to shape the cost of leave taking, in terms of respect and standing in the workplace, appears crucial. Further indications of the importance of these actors and the ideas they act on is given by the amount of attention family ministers have given the business community to advertise more

family-friendly business culture (4.3.2.3). An interesting feature is the discursive positioning of workers towards employer interests, e.g. in the reported approval by Ralf's department head, but more directly in the following statement:

Ralf: "from the perspective of an employer never truly great uh . of course I know that [...] well then with the second, in the situation with our second daughter . yes, that I likely felt that I could not afford it professionally, well to take parental leave exactly then, somehow . well, because we were very understaffed then, yes" (I28, 26:26-27:43)

I asked Ralf whether that thought had come from him, or if somebody had pressed him, and he was quite insistent, for "fairness' sake" (27:49-28:23) that the thought had come more from him rather than the environment. Based on dialogical theory, I suggest this distinction in responsibility is nonsense. I rather think that Ralf (responsively, see p. 63) enacted a cultural norm that is part of his work environment. This norm – not to take leave when colleagues are under pressure – inherently favours employer interests, while placing *responsibility* on prospective leave-takers, who are asked to act in solidarity with colleagues and direct superiors. The interpersonal desire for harmony among co-workers is thus channelled to produce outcomes (here: no leave) that both Ralf and his department head have mixed feelings about. They both end up enacting employer interests. In other words, *their consciousness as employees trumped their consciousness as fathers*. Mothers tended to have reversed priorities.

Beyond taking leave, the more long-term changes to fathers' routines are visible in their working time and scheduling. While none among my participants formally reduced to part-time employment, fathers were concerned with reducing overtime and being home in the evenings to play with children and take them to bed. Work missed in that period was done during the later evening or on weekends, remotely. For Thomas, Markus, and Ralf – all three professional fathers I interviewed – making this basic presence in the home possible required a change of employer/position.

Thomas (I24, 7:19-9:02) was confronted with a new boss, whose reputation preceded him as a superior who came out of investment banking, and demanded long hours (up to 10 p.m.) as a form of exerting dominance. Thomas described him

as a man whose wife lived in a different city, and who flew there on weekends, which left him with nothing to do in the evenings of the week. In anticipation of such a worsening of his working times, which “crossed the red line”, Thomas switched employers. While his new job offered less pay and prestige, at home the “blackberry remained off”, and nobody expected him to be available in the evenings.

Ralf (I28, 16:03-19:06) made a similar experience with his superior, a childless woman he described as “a crazy” who worked 70h a week, a “sad person” with no private life, who sent emails on Christmas night. Her work intensity “radiated” to the department, which in Ralf’s perception was “permanently understaffed”. In consequence, he reported, he worked 55h on a regular basis. Flexibility in his workplace meant “one is allowed to arrive before nine and leave after six”, and while time management was placed into the responsibility of the worker, the workload always made sure that one had more than 40h on the clock. This was currently compelling him to switch employers, so that he could spend more time with his children and wife.

Markus (I25, 17:51-19:35), in the first years of fatherhood still employed in consulting, spent a lot of time abroad. Having worked for his employer for a while, his standing had improved sufficiently that he “could fly home more often” and “telephone bills did not matter anymore”. His attempt to take two months of parental leave was interrupted by a change in the project schedule, for which he returned after one month, and got his full pay back in compensation. But after missing the birth of his second daughter because his plane was delayed, Markus switched jobs as well. At the time of the interview, he was the (German) CEO of a Middle-Eastern telecommunications company. His employees, who predominantly had Turkish roots, generally put “family first” anyhow, and had no problem with him flying home earlier when needed: “the children always come first”. Apart from the Middle-Eastern cultural influence in his company, he was the “boss”:

Markus: “because I’m the boss, at the end of the day probably nobody says anything anyhow, but it is truly accepted, and therefore . I currently have only the constraints I put on myself, that I say I want to be home for dinner, even if I keep working afterwards and such things . but that is . I’ll say okay, so there is one of my other bosses who doesn’t think that so cool, but I don’t care.” (I25, 17:51-19:35)

Markus has the temporal autonomy and power towards his employers to manage the degree of reconciliation he desires. As a superior himself, he supported working parents, and had a positive attitude to their performance. In his experience, parents simply had no time to waste time at work. Their consequent efficiency benefitted the company.

What this section overall reveals is that whereas fathers commonly made smaller adjustments to their schedules, or switched employers for the sake of reconcilability, they remained in full-time employment and oriented to the needs of the workplace. In parallel to Jenson’s (2009) “hegemony of the mother-child linkage”, the ‘father-profession linkage’ remains generally intact, with some concessions relative to a father’s time autonomy.

4.3.4 Strategies and Selectivities: a Summary

Which insights have been revealed in the last sections, and how do these insights fit into the overall argument put forth in this dissertation?

As elaborated in the early chapters, a key issue for governments and societies is how to organise social reproduction under evolving socio-economic conditions. Perhaps more so than agricultural societies, industrial societies require a formally protected space and time for reproduction; this motivated governmental intervention and the creation of social rights (Polanyi, 2001; Thompson, 1966; Marshall, 1950). German policy has gradually shifted to accommodate the needs of working mothers, not just since 2007, but since 1878. Parental leave and benefits, at least in the limited sense of *Mutterschutz*, are a very old pillar of Bismarck’s German welfare state, often less acknowledged than the social insurances. Throughout the history of the GDR and FRD two distinct institutional paths developed, both of which have an impact on today’s policy regime and discourse.

Solutions to the reproduction issue, viewed on the life-course scale, can be sequential (baby breaks) or simultaneous (part-time work), whereby sequential solutions allow a more specialised division of work, that is, a greater separation of spheres. Whereas the 1950s-1970s were characterised in West Germany by expanded sequential solutions, the last decades has enabled a mix of sequential and simultaneous solutions, which in tendency produce a one-and-half-breadwinner-model.

Two interrelated questions were posed above:

- i. Which ideas inform parents' and enterprises' strategies around parental leave?
- ii. How are these tied up in structural selectivities, and specifically, temporal ones?

First, the strategies of parents and enterprises towards leave taking appear to culminate in a vicious circle of expectations and experiences of gender inequality. Leave policies are selectively promoting fast returns for female professionals, while maintaining more traditional gender relations for the rest. This policy outcome was explained by the economic rationalities of income maximisation parents applied in their own decision making. However, it was also established that whereas money mattered, privileged parents, and notably fathers, were also moving to limit their working time in favour of family time. For enterprises, concessions towards increased 'family-friendliness' are informed by human resources arguments, notably skills shortages, and the consequent wish to retain highly skilled female workers. Family-friendly measures ought to be understood primarily as an outcome of negotiations between employers and privileged workers: direct negotiations, as well as negotiations channelled through the social partners, political parties, and parliamentary processes. Skills shortages provide the conjunctural enabling condition for professionals.

Secondly, there has been growing support for the adult-worker ideology in the last decades. In 1975, Pross already discussed the idea that being "only a housewife" was "problematic" for many women who felt left "standing in their husbands'

shadow” (Pross 1975, in Frevert, 1989, p. 273). He posits a desire to realise oneself as an individual, a search for a “meaning of life” beyond the servicing of husbands and children, as the key motivation for middle-class women in the 1970s to seek employment. Nowak’s (2010) account of the undesirability of the male-breadwinner-model reaffirms this general claim. My interviews show that parental leave was experienced negatively as a lifestyle rupture by mothers to a greater extent as by fathers. Longer periods at home first led to feelings of loneliness and dependence, then to professional disadvantages and stress. Discrepancies between traditional norms of motherhood and working motherhood, notably for Anna, furthermore led to feelings of guilt and anxiety. Accordingly, I have judged the adult-worker-model to be *dominant*, rather than *hegemonic*, because its legitimacy is perpetually in question, both in terms of alternatives, and in terms of viability. The harmonious idea of reconcilability, as promoted in public media, does not represent the experience of the everyday of parenthood.

Thirdly, gendered labour market segregation was clearly identified as the root of inequalities arising from formally gender-neutral policies. But segregation is a concept that requires unpacking; perhaps it is even the wrong – or an insufficient – term. Career models based on the (male) unencumbered worker reinforce unequal labour market statuses throughout the life-course. As Frevert has pointed out, part-time work, once seen as a solution for women to reconcile care with the economic and psychological needs to participate in the public sphere, is increasingly seen as a problem (Frevert, 1989, pp. 271–2). This problem must be located in the quality of part-time work as it is prevalent in Germany, which takes us back into the discussion of social insurance eligibilities, wage inequality, low recognition and intellectual stimulation. More subtly, it becomes visible that ‘feminine’ occupations are sometimes more reconcilable, such as back-office work, but also inferior in status and pay, and offer less ‘career’ opportunities (e.g. teaching). There is clearly a very persistent belief that specialist or leadership work cannot be done in part-time. This belief is only very slowly being challenged by dual leadership models and similar ‘experiments’. What this suggests is a disciplinary mechanism in the idea that privileged work is given only to those to devote the most flexibility and time to

their profession (Präsenzkultur). This logic of showing commitment immediately disadvantages 'encumbered' workers. The concept of encumberedness implies a separation of what is considered valuable work, and what is not. Care is constructed as a 'burden', rather than a normal and valuable – even desirable – part of life (see Himmelweit in 1.2). Generalised assumptions about women at a certain age spread discrimination in hiring and promotion decisions to childless women.

Fourthly, Präsenzkultur and restricted public childcare opening times lead to a rigidity of schedules, both in 'public' and 'private', which worsens the potential for reconciliation. Those schedules are frequently unsynchronised.

Elena: "what I find crass, and I have for example a number of friends who very consciously say we do not want children, yes, because we have built so much, we don't want to sacrifice that. [...] it is really still easier . in many regards in Germany to be a woman . I don't want children consciously, that is more accepted than a woman who wants children, but . I also want a job. I want a qualified profession. Then one has the Rabenmutter thing on the one side . and also in the kindergarten, as I said they are all nice and kind, but still they schedule the Christmas event for 14:30 in the middle of the week . I can't go then." (I25, 1:23:35-1:24:39)

Anecdotes such as Elena's exemplify that the adult-worker variant currently 'idealised' by professional women in Germany is not very compatible with parenthood. This more radically commodified variant of the adult-worker-model is unviable for sustainable social reproduction, because it effectively copied the male-breadwinner life-course onto professional women³⁴, while ignoring the old complementarity of roles. If one accepts gender equality as a key target, the obvious conclusion to this line of argument must be that the 'unencumbered adult-worker' norm needs to be exchanged for a more sustainable, genderless norm of the adult worker-carer. This points to the gap in German political left-feminist discourse that Nowak laments: the shortening of the working week. I will continue this discussion in the conclusion (chapter 6).

³⁴ This conclusion is restricted to professional women, not all women! See 4.3.2

4.4 Temporalities of the 'Private Sphere'

As indicated previously, looking at the temporal structures of the 'public sphere' is reductionist. To understand reconcilability problems, we must equally heed the structures of the 'private'. The following subsection focuses on the household and nuclear family (4.4.1). I will return to the private in the wider sense – social networks and civil society – in the subsequent section (4.4.2), before moving to public childcare provision in chapter 5.

An empirical problem that affects time research in the private is the lack of habitual accounting for time-uses, as elaborated in the methodology section (3.4). Most contributions that talk about private life and time try to measure the distribution of different tasks between household members. Important themes in this literature are the allocation and quality of free time and the gendered division of housework and care (Apps and Rees, 2005; Bittman and Wajcman, 2000; Craig and Brown, 2016; Gershuny and Sullivan, 2003; Mattingly and Sayer, 2006). The problem with studying free time or housework in the aggregate is that each category can include activities of rather varied nature. More importantly from a feminist perspective, these activities have different social status. The lack of accounting for private time – lack of visibility – is worsened by aggregate considerations, because they hide the hierarchical differences of who does what *specifically* at home (see methodology, 3.4).

The contemporary division of domestic work is not only characterised by persistent gender and hierarchy differences, but furthermore by a widespread experience of time scarcity. The growing prevalence of adult-worker or single-parent families, as well as the intensification of paid work, contribute as "*objective* explanations" to a trend of feeling rushed; respectively, ideas about good parenting and the high social status associated with being busy on the job and in "action-packed lives" combine into "*subjective* explanations" (Mattingly and Sayer, 2006, p. 205, original emphasis). Mattingly & Sayer problematise the "seeming paradox between increases in free time and concurrent increases in subjective feelings of time pressure" (ibid, p.206). Whereas free time has increased in historical comparison

between the 1970s and 1990s, this trend does not continue in the 2000s. Furthermore, statistics around the world suggest that women work 30min to 1h more each day than men (Sayer, 2005). Mattingly & Sayer's findings indicate that more free time reduces fathers' perceptions of feeling rushed, but not mothers'. The gap between childless women/men vis-à-vis mothers indicates a "family penalty" where mothers' habits to perpetually tend to household and children change the quality of free time (ibid, p.217). The urgency of small but frequent daily demands on mothers result in *multitasking*, which has been associated with psychological distress and higher reported time pressure (Craig and Brown, 2016). Some disagreement exists in how far increased hours in paid work make this experience of feeling rushed worse, or to what extent multitasking in the home is equally stressful across all forms and intensities of mothers' employment (Craig and Brown, 2016, p. 238; Sullivan and Gershuny, 2013). Work might even be experienced as relaxation relative to the stress of the home. In her early work, Hochschild (2001) inferred that mothers purposefully extended hours in paid employment for that reason. Hochschild's more recent work, however, suggests a greater concern with protecting family "downtime" by outsourcing domestic tasks (Hochschild, 2012; van den Scott, 2014, p. 481). From a Bourdieuan perspective, one might consider that children's demands on mothers, and mothers feeling responsible to respond to children very quickly (being 'on call'), lead to a temporal disempowerment of mothers. In line with that idea, my own data suggests that multitasking creates an experience of *fragmented time*, which is not only annoying, but also prohibits activities that require a certain amount of ongoing concentration from being executed. This limits mothers' participation opportunities in education and paid work, as well as a range of hobbies and social activities.

4.4.1 The Domestic Division of Work

As discussed previously (3.4), a clear separation between categories such as housework, childcare, and free time, is only of limited help when trying to make sense of domestic rhythms. For one the boundaries between categories can be fleeting, but more often it is because the frequency of switching between tasks is so high that tasks are experienced as simultaneous. In such cases we speak of

multitasking. As mentioned above, multitasking has become associated with stress. Together with the general low recognition of house and care work, the reality of multitasking housework and care potentially combines into a particularly dissatisfying experience. In reflection of the data I collected, I arrive at the conclusion that all professional participants felt that housework, and to some extent childcare, were inferior tasks to paid work. The bottom rung of the activity ladder is without doubt occupied by *cleaning*.

Imke described housework as “horrible” (I24, 33:34-34:26). Albeit the couple lived in a male-breadwinner-model at the time of the interview, Thomas put down 7h of housework, which comprised his duties of shopping for groceries, washing, and cooking. Imke put down 15h. The central burden she perceived was the cleaning.

Imke: “if anything was possible, then I would first [...] search for a cleaning aid for me . there . because otherwise . well, in the long run this is impossible . now it works, because I have time, but [...] next to . even half a job I can’t imagine it anymore. [...] but I think in principle, I find that . I always have an unpleasant feeling to have people clean for me . that is so, there I just have such a bad feeling. Well, therefore I was also not that happy with [having a cleaner previously], because somehow one must manage this oneself, but . I still notice how much time it robs me off, and how many nerves“(I24, 40:35-41:40)

As strategies for coping with too much housework, Sullivan & Gershuny (2013) have examined multitasking (as outlined above) and outsourcing. The latter has also been discussed in terms of care migration and the dynamic between *The ‘Mistress’ and the ‘Maid’ in the Globalized Economy* (Young, 2001). Imke expresses a common awareness and occasional unease amongst German female professionals that their lifestyles rely on the ‘dirty work’ of less privileged women. The least desirable activities are outsourced first, whereas more respected or person-bound activities are multitasked by parents, predominantly mothers. The widespread derision for cleaning reflects the hierarchy of activities in the broader social division of work, and furthermore the social status of those enacting these activities on a daily basis. Unfortunately, a lot of time-use research does not consider housework on a disaggregated basis, which makes it difficult to assess in how far certain groups can

‘cherry pick’ among activities in the home (Grunow and Baur, 2014, p. 511).

Especially men’s sharing in domestic tasks needs to be considered in relation to the status of specific activities. The literature on “doing gender” has long established that frequently egalitarian ideologies remain a surface phenomenon, whereas the distribution of domestic labour remains notably unequal for heterosexual couples (Bianchi *et al.*, 2012; Goldberg, 2013; Grunow and Baur, 2014; Hochschild, 2003b). This is demonstrably the case in Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2015b).

Domestic divisions of work need to be rationalised in some way to cover up divergences between ideals and reality. As Hochschild describes in vivid detail in *The Second Shift* (2003b), families create their own ‘myths’ to legitimate those divergences. Such legitimations appeared in all couple interviews I conducted, and I will show a few telling examples here, all of which are responses to my question whether the couple has a fixed division of work at home.

Imke	no, not at all
Thomas	mh-mh (negation)
Imke	came in interaction
Thomas	exactly, exactly . simply who-who is better at something
Imke	Hm-hm (assent) . true
Thomas	Simply comparative advantage hehe
Imke	Hehe yes, and complementary, [so-
Thomas	[No, well . that is . a technical term
Imke	Aaah
Thomas	Yes, so who is more efficient (leistungsfähiger) is who can (verb missing) this aspect-
Imke	Yes, exactly, is who goes into that niche
Thomas	Yes, if I would start now to clean and you would start to cook
Imke	oh god!
Thomas	I don’t believe that either . would be good
Imke	No, that would not be fun
Thomas	Then we would have paired . I’ll say southern hygiene with uh . English food . hehe*
Imke	Hehe . terrible! Ok hehe

(I24, 39:45-40:26)* disparaging stereotypes

Discussing their division of work, at some point the narrative of comparative advantage enters the discourse. There is no previous mention of anything similar in the interview. Thomas works in banking, perhaps the term *comparative advantage*

(see Shaikh, 2005 for a summary and critique) is used there to legitimate or explain an ideal division of international labour. Here, the idea of advantages through specialisation is applied to the household, from an academic perspective hardly a new approach (e.g. Becker, 1985). The rationale of sexed specialisation underpins the male-breadwinner-model. And somehow, the narrative of 'who does it best' seems fair to both Thomas and Imke, at least in that moment. It offers a more appealing explanation than to say the couple enacts a traditional gender relation, with the concession that Thomas does the washing, cooking, and part of the larger groceries (Imke does the smaller shopping nearby and prepares the afternoon snacks for their child). Yet it is undeniable that Imke does all the hated cleaning, and that "needs to change" (I24). Soon, she says, because she is reorienting to go back to work. Not to the school, but to return as a priestess, or write a PhD in theology. There are several options under consideration that promise a better future for her, in which Thomas might even take over the 'second shift' of care and housework to even out their "life balance sheet" (I24). That hope, it appears to me, helps to cope with the gap between Imke's egalitarian ideals and the couple's reality.

A similar dynamic was reported by Markus and Elena (I25, 43:15-44:25): between them, tasks are allocated according to skills. She cooks because she "can do it better", he compensates by doing the dishes and taking out the trash. He irons and folds the laundry. Markus further has to fix the internet, says Elena, because she "does not have a clue about technology". It is clearly "his job" to "wrestle" with IT companies. It is also his job to carry the water, because "she hates that like the plague"³⁵. Markus says the housework, done "on the side", is distributed roughly equally, "pari-pari". She agrees. The allocation is done "direct-democratically", which means that "everyone does what they can" do best.

I am slightly amused how the terms *comparative advantage* (Thomas) and *direct democracy* (Elena) are used to denote the same logic of specialisation. The link between signifier and signified does appear a tad arbitrary here, but as long as the

³⁵ In Germany sparkling water, beer, soft drinks and the like are bought in large boxes full of returnable bottles. Those are heavy, and classically buying drinks is therefore men's work. It is often done on the weekend with the car from special shops, which look like gas stations and have a similar masculine atmosphere as DIY stores.

signs serve to legitimate the status quo, that hardly seems to matter. The analogy between a symbol for a good system of distribution or decision-making and the couple's division of domestic work is the analytically relevant finding here. My data does not allow me to make inferences over the veracity of any of these narratives with respect to 'observable' time-uses. But what is interesting is that the couples that ascribed to an egalitarian ideal reported a division of domestic work explained through the principle of specialisation. This poses a contrast to Ralf and Christina, who intended a more traditional gender relation. In their case, too, Christina emphasised Ralf's help in the household – unlike her husband, who asserted that the costs of dealing with household and children were largely carried by his wife. He legitimated this fact with reference to the importance his job had taken. Unlike the other fathers, Ralf readily admitted to doing less in the home, to putting more effort into his work. The imbalance, even for him, is still an *admission* – but it is one that can be made in front of his wife. It does not appear to endanger the emotional climate between the couple. In fact, Christina's complaint directs itself to a society and environment hostile to full-time mothers, to a lack of support for her more traditional ideal.

Another interesting discovery was made with regard to the rationalities discussed by Arabic women, in the absence of their husbands: Amira and Lamia suggested that Arabic husbands helped at home, but the majority of the work was left to the wife, unlike in their imagination of German families. They also suggested that for Arabic men there was a cultural barrier to visibly engage in household tasks, notable in Lamia's suggestion that many husbands helped their wives, but not when guests were around. More research on how men from more gender-conservative migrant backgrounds negotiate increasingly dominant egalitarian partnership norms would be fascinating to conduct, but may require deeper trust relations with these communities than I could establish.

What these accounts reinforce is the dominant ideological status of the egalitarian ideal promoted by the reconcilability discourse (also 4.3.2.1). But most accounts simultaneously convey how unrealistic that ideal is in the face of reality, and that other ideals, conservative-Christian or Arabic, co-exist and remain significant for

individuals and couples. Contestation happens thus in the friction between different gender ideologies, but also between the dominant ideology and the frequent disappointments it creates in the face of reality. These findings underline why I think the adult-worker ideology is dominant, but not completely hegemonic in Germany: it simply cannot present itself as a viable reality for the masses. Instead, even privileged parents experience irreconcilability, feel rushed, and discriminated against. Most clearly, they complain about time scarcities. These also become visible in a perceived lack of free time.

As elaborated above, gendered realities produce gendered consciousnesses, traceable in gendered forms of time reckoning (Press and Townsley, 1998). This is likely to affect ‘as what’ categories and time-uses are perceived in the first place. How *free time* is thought of differently, and how that matters between spouses, can be exemplified by Elena’s contestation of Markus’ idea of free time, voiced in the context of filling out the time-use table, item “free time”, which I was prompted to elaborate:

Markus	Free time . what does free time mean? Free time without children?
Nina	Time to one-self . also free time with children . so everything that is fun, simply put – which could also be different things, but everything that one experiences as . free time oneself, as freely shaped time, which one need not, which one can . which one enjoys.
	...
Elena	Well free time, where I have the need-uh or the feeling that I am doing something for myself, or something, would be Friday mornings, where I’m off [work] . when I am off (frei haben), but -
Markus	Yes, but in the evening when the children are in bed we always have another two hours of free time [yes, in which we write random emails, bank transfers for our offline family members] yes, but that is still an hour from Monday to Thursday, and Fridays.
Elena [Markus]	Then there stand eight hours free time, I don’t really have eight hours of free time! That is ridiculous. I don’t really have eight hours of free time – [four?] eight hours – yes but four hours from Monday to Thursday, one each, and the Friday morning are another four hours. I don’t have 8 hours free time, that would be a complete day that I have to myself, that is nonsense [well, but...] no! . no, so . for me, if I sit here in the evening, then uh we fold the laundry, we tidy up or something, that is not my impression of free time. If we say anything that is fun [Nina: hmhm] . [Markus: hm, well okay then...] . it’s not an imposition, but .[then let us say during the week for you five hours, if you have the Friday morning . one hour in total . and what do we have on the weekends?] . eh, well this here . care work and free time, that uh flows into each other seamlessly for us I believe, because for

	example on the weekends, since we have a rather strictly regulated day due to our dual employment, we try on the weekends and also on Friday afternoons, we try to [organise] the daily routine according to the wishes and ideas of the children, or respectively what we all want to do together as a family . if we want to go to the zoo, or if the 'Mäuschen' ['little mice', their daughters] . E for example sometimes just likes to be home . then she wants to run around in her pyjamas all day . and in the beginning we were a little surprised (befremdet), but meanwhile I rather like it hehe [hehe] so we run around in our pyjamas all day [hehe] . and uh . that is certainly also education work, because inbetween there are a lot of conflicts to resolve, but it's free time.
Markus	Yes, that means Saturday to Sunday each six hours
Elena	Yes, the weekend is free time so to say
Markus	So, 12, then it is for me . 13 . and for you . so, we said four .
Elena	Yes, the same as for you, or do I have a longer weekend?
Markus	Uh, your Friday morning . four hours
Elena	But Friday mornings I don't do what I want, I mean I work hard to go to one hour of yoga each week ... [Markus: okay, you get one hour] . cheapskate! Hehe, now I understand what you meant when you said this will be contested amongst family members* [Nina: hehe] hehe – tse! – men!

(I25, 39:52-43:15) * I made that hint when introducing the table

First it should be said that negotiations about time-use, such as displayed above, are relatively usual in the interviews I conducted. Disagreements among partners, as well as joint considerations which amount of time seemed appropriate, and what should be counted, what not, were absolutely common place in response to Table 1 (p. 116). Among these accounts the passage above is an illustrative 'strong' case. What determines the amount of free time for each partner – the number that is eventually written into the table printed on my interview guide – is the product of a negotiation process that draws on several sources: his beliefs, her beliefs, my commentary about the category "free time", and the interaction throughout the exchange. The bargaining dynamic (Markus' offer of four, then one, rather than eight hours) is underlined by Elena's argumentation. An interesting aspect of their negotiation is that apparently, with the exception of Friday mornings, *they* always have free time *together*. Does this suggests that they have no individual free time? While that is possible, Markus' use of the pronoun 'we' seems once more a rhetoric strategy (compare 4.2.3). Talking in the 'we' automatically suggests that one

partner is not 'slacking off' while the other is still doing housework. Yet Markus' 'we' and perception of the evenings as free time is challenged by Elena's 'I'. The divergence in perceptions could be explained by the fact that Markus does not perceive housework as an important interruption of his evening relaxation. For him, the absence of paid work and the absence of the children might be sufficient indicators for free time (M: "free time without children?"). For Elena, the absence of children marks a clear quality dimension of free time, which she expresses in the distinction between "doing something for myself" (Friday morning) and the simultaneity of education and free time (weekends). To the extent that Friday mornings are considered 'pure' free time, the absence of her husband might also be worth considering. The more intense emotional work and multitasking mothers tend to do in the family, towards children and husbands, has been considered in the literature as the lasting impact of deeply internalised ideas about femininity (Radcliffe and Cassell, 2014). The result is less 'pure' free time for mothers.

What is striking about the passage, irrespectively of how much work either partner does effectively, is the moral need to have similar amounts of free time, even if that means bending previous statements. What this passage does not give is a reliable time-use account; instead it constructs the 'family myth' of equal free time, despite different ideas what even counts as free time, and how much of it is really had.

What I found particularly interesting were efforts to present oneself favourably to legitimate, but also to contest, the mismatch between ideal, experiences, and expectations. Noticeable examples of such strategies, not previously discussed, are Imke's repeated self-presentation as a priestess, her 'true' vocation – despite the fact that she has not been enacting that role for several years. Another example is Elena's response to the following interview question:

Nina	Which priorities do you have in time distribution? What comes first in the everyday?
Elena	By necessity the job.
Markus	As said before, what comes first is the eh . the frame for the job is set by the children, I mean you bring them in the morning, collect them, therefore they are determining . and-
Elena	Yes, you are right . no, you are right . really . true, and if I had to decide between job and children, I would chose my children. [...] he is right,

	that was my old me answering 'job' . my new me says, there he is right, children. Of course . sure, and if the kindergarten calls, eh . one of the girls has earaches and cries and needs to be picked up, taken to the doctor, clearly . I drop everything and drive, that is true.
Markus	For me, by necessity the job.
Elena	(sighs ironically-compassionate) one by necessity has to win the bread after all

(I25, 46:23-47:15)

Markus hits on something very important here, which is not just Elena's 'true' priorities relative to her earlier self-presentation, but the temporal binding effect the childcare commitment has on her daily schedules. I have illustrated this 'time bind' in Figure 11. The diagram depicts in somewhat simplified form their average week-day. The feature I want to draw attention to is the fact that Elena takes and picks up the children from kindergarten (Kita). This binds her leftover time to these two events, in effect curtailing her time in paid work. As mentioned above, she has reduced to part-time, which has stopped her career progression. Markus, even though he does engage in housework and childcare, is not in the same way bound to specific times. And this nuance matters an awful lot, because it preserves his time autonomy at her expense.

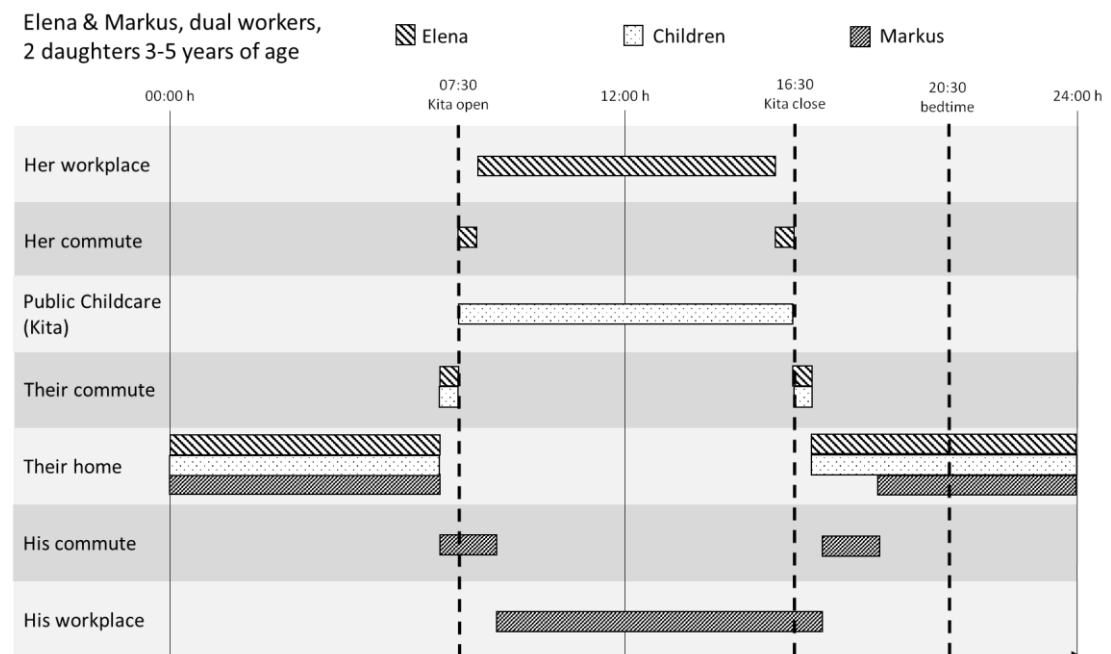


Figure 11 Childcare Time Bind in Daily Schedule

Regular emergencies, such as sick children, add to this basic dynamic. The recurring finding is the ongoing mother-child linkage, which is active in key moments that bind mothers to the child and to the home, and thus reduce their time autonomy in other spaces. The husband who takes over these particular 'time-binding' private duties on a regular basis is still exotic. The ongoing temporal division of gendered spheres, that is, the lack of synchronisation between the working and the children's world, makes it harder to traverse between those spheres.

A central theme that discussions about different time budgets (paid work, leisure, care, housework...) usually mention, but fail to address systematically, are the temporal structures – of the day, the week – in which activities can take place. This structural embedding is important to understand the limitations of different availabilities and synchronisation problems between activities or spheres: this is the case for fixed institutional schedules, such as opening hours or school schedules, but it is also important with regard to less formalised cultural rhythms, such as mealtimes or bedtimes. With regard to methodological improvements for statistical-representative research, activities such as taking the children to kindergarten should be key information for time-use statistics to pick up. In general, all activities that are 'time-bound' should be considered as crucial to assess the temporal inclusion of different social identities/groups. By inclusion I mean either autonomy to engage flexibly, or alternatively a lack of synchronisation problems in an improved collective temporal grid. To understand where the biggest synchronisation problems are, time statistics should therefore not only record durations, but also timings and temporal dependencies between institutions or spheres, to make representative analyses of the German collective temporal rhythms and "temporal stratification" possible (van den Scott, 2014).

4.4.2 Extended Familialism and Civil Society

The last section focussed on the nuclear family. The remaining part of this chapter will widen the scope of consideration where and by whom childcare takes place. The African proverb teaches us that "it takes a village to raise a child", referring to the importance of community structures in providing a safe and educational

environment for growing up (Goldberg, 2016). In the contemporary German welfare state, the village has been replaced by a mix of public education and care, clubs and associations (Vereine), religious communities, paid services, and personal networks of relatives and friends. Looking at this multitude of social relations from a welfare theoretical perspective, the relative weights of different actors, and shifts between those weights, matter to diagnose movements such as ‘defamilialisation’ or ‘recommodification’ (Esping-Andersen, 1999).

Below, I will examine family in the wider sense, that is, the role of private networks (especially grandparents), and the challenge of spatial distances to dependability (4.4.2.1). Secondly, I will address civil society and voluntary work (4.4.2.2).

4.4.2.1 Private Networks

Elena: “we have here in Cologne I believe, because my mother also lives here and uh, Markus’ parents also live here, we have the maximal **home field advantage**, because both grandparent couples engage themselves much in the care of the children, and help a lot.” (I25, 4:48-5:32)

What became clear comparing participants and their ability to manage daily lives was the important role of grandparents. For Michelle, the unemployed single mother of one daughter, her mother’s support took an interpersonal and financial role (I44). For Ralf’s father, tending to the grandson made it possible to live out an active carer role that had been unthinkable in his younger years:

Christina: “Ralf’s parents in the parallel street, those are already 76 but still relatively fit . and my father in law, he, he is very good with children. Would have preferred back then already to become a childcare practitioner rather than any profession men did. Today that would not have been a problem, but in his generation everyone would have looked at him strange. And now he can live that out.” (I28, 32:25-33:19)

Of course, Christina adds, this does not work for many parents, because grandparents are often too old, frail, or far away to help. Anna (I22) struggles with the fact that her parents live in southern Germany, a several hours’ drive away. Since her separation from her husband, the relation to the mother-in-law has

cooled. Her wish for somebody close-by to take responsibility off her shoulders remains unfulfilled (4.3.3.2). Thomas' parents are too old to keep up with the children. Imke's mother minded her granddaughter while Imke completed additional vocational training (I24, 24:53-25:55). Elena and Markus' dual breadwinner model would not have worked, if Elena's mother did not regularly help out:

Elena: "well at least once a week. And as I said, till January [...] [my daughter] was with her during the day [...] Markus' parents live on the other riverside, they are not reached as practically as my mother, who lives here down the street . that is well . convenient . and if I am now away on business longer, or something happens, then I tell the girls they are sleeping at grandma's, [...] (Markus') parents we see less often, but . pretty much also regularly" (I25, 52:43-53:34)

What this example reveals is that even moderate distances, which could be covered in less than one hour by car, may discourage daily interaction when closer solutions are possible. All examples of very frequent grandparent support I encountered took place inside the same neighbourhood. Proximity therefore seemed to exist in three layers: within one neighbourhood, within one town or area, and beyond that. Grandparents on that last distance only gave hands-on support during holidays, whereas support within one town seemed to depend on various interpersonal factors, including the urgency with which help was needed. Some prospective parents purposefully move back to their home towns to have access to their personal support networks:

Sibille: "that was definitely a major point. Well I always said that – when uh children come, then in such a way that we have at least one family in the vicinity. [...] I have seen with so many [people] how difficult that is, when one has in principle no grandparents or siblings, babysitter, whomever in the vicinity. For us it was always the case that the main circle of friends and family was here, and uh . I believe I already know to appreciate that, and that will get significantly more when I go back to work . simply to know that one has someone, who can jump in. because . since we both have a job that demands a certain flexibility, uh, it can happen that – my husband is occasionally on business travel, then he is away for two or three days, that I simply . need grandparents around the corner, yes" (I48, 45:44-46:37)

In this passage, Sibille links her adult-worker family expectation with the need for grandparents' support, specifically for unplanned or flexible care needs that follow from her and her husband's occupations. What I find interesting is that she mentions grandparents and siblings as potential babysitters, and then trails off by saying "whomever". She does not consider friends as regular supporters with childcare.

This is an important distinction to make between family and friends, at least among professionals: friends are not expected to "jump in" when childcare is needed.

Parents' friends fulfil a different role: They act as conversation partners about children, as advisors and role models, but they are not regularly asked to babysit.

Between parents and childless friends, furthermore, there is a danger for rifts caused by different lifestyles. Elena and Michelle reported that having children as first-movers among their friends led to them feeling isolated, suddenly living in a different world than their former peers.

Considered in terms of dependability (p. 127) it becomes clear that reliable childcare support is not commonly given by friends. Friendship usually lacks the dimension of obligation, which – differently phrased – entails the sense of responsibility for mutual daily care attributed to family. With regard to relatives, proximity in daily interactions turned out to be particularly important. Due to the mobility many young people have, going to university or working in a different town or even country, the necessary proximity for hands-on support cannot be considered as given. For those who travelled, it needs to be purposefully re-established. The findings in this study leave no doubt that familial support networks substantially help to ease reconcilability strains, and are particularly important for working mothers to delegate childcare in an informal and flexible manner, especially in emergencies.

Narrowing in on grandparents, what became quite obvious was the more likely and regular involvement of grandmothers. Ralf's father in his enthusiasm for children is an exception within my sample. The closest link appeared between mothers and their mothers. Care-giving along the 'maternal lineage' is an important facet of

networks in which mutual care can be delegated according to need. But prospectively, this form of delegation is likely to run into problems. Grandmothers' availability is today still given by the previous generation's male-breadwinner-model, and the generational alignment in terms of age. The more parenthood is delayed in the life-course, the likelier it moves into a phase where the grandparent generation is too old to give support, or may even need additional care. These assumptions depend on life expectancy and health developments in the future. The problematic has been discussed in terms of "women in the middle" or the "sandwich generation" (Brody, 1981). As Künemund has aptly described the general concern from the perspective of elderly care:

"reducing the welfare state spending on the elderly may aggravate the burden placed on the *daughters* of the baby boom cohorts, as they are less likely to share care activities with siblings and as they face competing demands from both younger and elderly kin as well as from the labour market" (Künemund, 2006, p. 12, emphasis added)

Künemund suggests that whereas the sandwich generation exists, its proponents are usually not particularly burdened with work (Künemund, 2006, p. 20). Whereas the author concedes a potential worsening of the situation, he also emphasizes the potential of men taking over a greater share of care work. Keck and Saraceno see future trends more pessimistically:

"Whatever the development at the level of preferences and values, in the next two decades the expected overall growth of care dependent elderly people, coupled with demographic and family changes, will effect negatively the ratio between care givers and individuals in need of care in Germany." (Keck and Saraceno, 2009, pp. 5–6)

In the comparative policy literature, Germany has been characterised as a regime in which elderly care is met by a policy mix of "de-familialization and supported familialism", facilitated by services and cash-transfers, "with another large share left to familialism by default" since the eligibility level of disability support is relatively high (Saraceno, 2010, p. 37). The positioning of the elder-care phase in the life-course further suggests for women that the 'drop out' from the labour market due to childcare is often extended for elderly care. This is likely to cement employers'

experience of women's reduced availability and flexibility, and thus maintain their expectations about future female workers. This brief excursion into debates on elderly care demonstrate that grandparents have an ambiguous role in childcare arrangements, and in how their presence and proximity impacts the middle-aged generation, especially women.

Before I will turn to voluntary work, I would like to say a few words about paid domestic care, such as babysitting or au-pairs. The latter are privilege of the upper classes. Albeit I talked to several rather affluent families, none of them seriously considered having an au-pair. With the exception of Anna, who relied on babysitters more frequently, even this more informal form of paid care was not very widely used. Quite often 'babysitters' were family members, often siblings or cousins (e.g. Markus' brother; I25, 53:38-53:59). In other cases babysitters were older girls from the parents' environment, such as an intern from the kindergarten (I24) or somebody from around the neighbourhood:

Christina: "I now have two 14 year old girls, who do the baby sitter. Fortunately, they don't take much [money]." (I28b, 6:08-6:41)

The important thing to take away is that unlike grandparents, babysitters did usually not play a major role in childcare. Furthermore, their employment was infrequent, short, and very informal.

Overall, therefore, I conclude that the importance of family remains very high in German childcare arrangements, specifically so in emergency situations. The possibility of an adult-worker-model depends on whether or not childcare can be delegated, which usually means having grandparents close-by rather than having private paid carers.

Whereas public childcare expansion has had a defamilialising effect on mothers, this effect is limited by rigid schedules and insufficient provision. I will explain this in more detail in chapter 5 on public childcare. Furthermore, the relatively spontaneous nature of non-parental familialised childcare (e.g. by grandparents) suggests that its importance in resolving reconcilability problems is unlikely to be revealed by durations of care work reported in time-use surveys. It is not the

amount of time that matters here, but the timing, and the flexibility of care-giving by relatives. This highlights the importance of 'time-binds' and availability on the one hand, and the meaning of *familialism beyond the nuclear family* on the other.

4.4.2.2 Civil Society, Parenting Spaces, and Voluntary Work

On the borderland between private and public childcare, as well as family services, lie community institutions: these often have a little bit of public funding, take place outside the home, or are organised by volunteers on a non-profit basis. A good example is the city of Cologne's KIWI programme. KIWI, the *Kinderwillkommensbesuch* (children welcome visit), comprises an offer to young parents, about 6 weeks after the birth, to be visited at home by a local volunteer. The volunteer brings a little gift and a lot of information about local offers for families. The primary purpose of the visit is to give parents information on how to integrate into local parent networks. Given the experience of loneliness reported by mothers, it makes sense how meeting like-minded people in similar life situations can be helpful. The KIWI programme is organised by the city youth welfare office, but executed by partner NGOs in each district. Relying on volunteers does not only make personal visits financially possible, but also avoids a sense of privacy invasion by the state. A youth office employee commented that the authorities were aware of the conflictual reputation they had with families³⁶, and that the involvement of laypeople from the neighbourhoods had been a reflected decision to make KIWI more informal (I39). In the earliest phase of parenthood, midwives are also worth mentioning. Midwives accompany families around birth and give initial practical advice how to handle a new-born. Participants told me that midwives helped to form connections between their clients, bringing like-minded mothers together (I24, 30:17-30:58).

Beyond the initial weeks of parenthood, a branch of publicly financed services for families is organised under the label *Familienbildung* (family education).

Familienbildung takes place in centres, often affiliated to the non-statutory welfare

³⁶ The youth office is known as the people who have the authority to take the children away. Especially among parents who perceive themselves as vulnerable to accusations of bad parenting, the youth office is thus seen as a threat.

providers, which offer classes and meeting groups for parents and children. These can be sports or hobby-related things, but centrally revolve around parenting advice, either by peers or by professionals. The course *Starke Eltern-Starke Kinder*® developed by the DJI is one of the most wide-spread offers (Tschöpe-Scheffler, 2004). Anna joined this course to meet up with other parents and ease her own anxieties as a mother who had never previously engaged with children. The issues raised by parents today do not substantially vary from the issues of classical pedagogy, and revolve around the questions of *what it means to be a good parent* (Tschöpe-Scheffler, 2005, p. 252). The course builds on the democratic and humanist tradition of pedagogy (Rousseau, Fröbel; also Comenius, Pestalozzi, Korczak), and emphasises self-experience and reflection in the process of educating children (ibid). Another type of discourse in demand with parents is child development: at which age a child should be able to do what (pioneered by Piaget, 1970). I will return to this theme in the discussion of childcare practitioners' perspectives below (5.4.2).

A second branch of community building around families, often in practice interlinked with Familienbildung, exists in the form of Familienzentren, an initiative by the Land NRW. These family centres group various offers towards families together, usually at the site of a kindergarten. Next to themed evenings and more professional family services, these centres also offer family cafés (Familiencafé). The latter format, which also exists independently, takes the style of a coffee shop, which is adapted to the needs of parents with small children. The family café provides a toddler-safe meeting and chatting environment for parents, as well as playing spaces for the children. The advantage of the café over the traditional courses in Familienbildung is that the café has an open-door format: it is open flexibly, whereas the traditional activities take place according to a regular schedule (I22, 10:56-12:58). As Thomas commented on his wife's positive impression, the cafés tend towards a very feminine culture.

Thomas: “[another father and I] were there in the evening, and went in there . what was it called, not pink-red . into such a café . where supposedly it was clearly a parent-child café . there we were looked at as men . who are these guys, who are turning up there? [Imke: hehe] well we were really . looked at really strangely, because we disrupted this women’s groove . and everything there was done in pink [Imke: hehe, exactly. They did cupcakes there] well that was . welcoming, not from the people who ran the place, but from the surroundings one noticed: we are intruders . those don’t belong here [...] also when I was there alone, that . I went there a few times with [my daughter] during parental leave, because it was quite nice there, but . well, Willkommenskultur . if one [uses] the term . that did not exist back then . that was, that wasn’t there. No.” (I24, 1:17:15-1:19:08)

Thomas proceeds to recount an older friend’s experience of being a father on a playground 15 years ago, who felt he was regarded as a rapist by the mothers present. Today, Thomas suggests, fathers are normal on a playground, if still a minority. This example illustrates rather well how gendered parenting spaces often still are, and how young fathers who do engage actively are confronted with places clearly dominated by women. But the playground comment also suggests that change is clearly underway. A local NGO I was in contact with ran specific father-child groups to give fathers an opportunity to spend time together. This prevents fathers on leave from being lonely with their children, and allows fathers in general to engage with children and other men.

The problem that affects a lot of these local – and often free or low fee – offers is the availability of either funds or volunteers, and the degree of professionalism and reliability that can be achieved when relying on the latter. Civil society is passing through a phase of structural change in which traditional areas of sports, conviviality, and emergency management decline, whereas new fields of international solidarity, childcare and education are growing. Surveys around civic engagement (Simonson, Vogel and Tesch-Römer, 2016) show that engagement is rising, from 34% in 1999 to 43.6% in 2014, in particular among the well-educated

(52.3%). The authors of the study point out, however, that growth often happened in paid positions (Krimmer, 2018, p. 197). Whereas foundations and non-profit corporations increased in numbers in the last two decades, the trend for associations (Vereine) is negative.

In order to better understand the connection between civic engagement and working time, the North-Rhine Westphalian Labour Ministry has commissioned a study from the WSI³⁷ (Klenner, Pfahl and Seifert, 2001). The results are revealing, if not surprising. Hierarchies in labour and family relations impact and continue in social relations around volunteering. The higher the temporal autonomy, the more likely the civic engagement. Women's 'second shift' in the home explains the lower percentages and times of female volunteers, particularly in East Germany, where the adult-worker-model is more prevalent. In the West, female volunteers are usually part-time workers, who engage only if their domestic duties are already taken care of. Men between 45-65 and employed in prestigious positions volunteer the most. Respectively, single men or men in a childless relationship volunteered much less.

The presence of children in a family increases the likelihood of volunteering significantly. This is because a lot of volunteering positions involve childcare or children's free time in sports clubs or similar (Klenner, Pfahl and Seifert, 2001). Voluntary work is also a key resource for parent-initiative kindergartens, who cannot compensate their labour demand through paid work. Between 1999 and 2014 the share of people volunteering in 'school and kindergarten' activities rose from 5.9% to 9.1%³⁸ (Simonson, Vogel and Tesch-Römer, 2016). Results from the 2016 ZIVIS survey suggest further growth in this area, which was almost non-existent in the 1950s, began to grow in the 1970s, and has been booming in the last decade (Priemer, Krimmer and Labigne, 2017). Gender segregation in voluntary work, identical to paid work, means that the majority of volunteers active in these fields are women. Prospectively, the noticeable trend in policies towards an adult-

³⁷ WSI: Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut, Hans-Böckler Stiftung

³⁸ Three categories of activities rose in that time by approximately 5%. All others rose less, stagnated, or declined. The increase is thus quite noticeable.

worker-model is likely to cause labour shortages in these volunteering spaces around social reproduction.

Another key finding in the report is the scheduling of traditional volunteering activities around the Fordist working week. Most activities are scheduled on evenings and weekends, which prevents workers in flexible or evening/weekend hours from participating. Put differently, the schedules of civil society have often not yet undergone the process of flexibilisation apparent in paid work. Family cafés, mentioned above, are one example of this. The comparison of an amateur sports club, in which a certain group trains every Tuesday night, to a gym, where any member can come and go as they please between 6:00 a.m. and 22:00 p.m., seven days a week, gives another good example. The latter offer is available for pretty much everybody, temporally speaking, whereas the former includes only those who can reliably have Tuesday evenings off. The vast majority of German leisure associations is still organised in the first mode. For a good range of activities flexibilisation appears unrealistic in practice, because the small organisations supporting them do not have the resources to increase their availability around the clock. In consequence, any further flexibilisation of labour hours is likely to affect associational life negatively. This centrally affects families, because among all citizens they are among the most integrated in this sphere of free time and support activities.

4.5 So what's the Problem?

In the beginning of this chapter, I began to reflect how for female professionals it never seems to be the 'right time' to have children. In the life-course of professionals, modelled on the 'unencumbered' worker, there is no adequate time reserved for active parenthood. Mismatches between expectations towards working parents result in overloaded schedules, both in terms of work and in terms of decision-making and processing, the so-called rush-hour of life. Parenthood, in consequence, is anticipated ambivalently. It is imagined benignly as long-term joy

and emotional security (dependability of family); but it is also associated with worries about being able to coordinate everyday life.

The lacking synchronisation between the schedules of the working world and the family world (kindergartens, schools, associational life, etc.) has been presented as the root of reconcilability problems. Life-course scales and weekly scales of temporal norms are interlinked, for example in the 'rule' that part-time workers do not advance far in their career, or in the time binds on weekly public childcare that restrict full-time employment for both parents, and thereby 'damage' one career in the long run. These links are reproduced in circles of experiences and expectations, through which agents signal their own position and make sense of others. Signalling high availability and flexibility on the job works as a competitive strategy and disciplinary mechanism to incentivise high job commitment for professionals. This logic automatically leads to penalties for 'encumbered' workers, that is, carers.

In contemporary Germany, this conflict is further articulated as a transition from the 'old' male-breadwinner-norm, Fordism, and its societal schedules to the 'new' ideal of an adult-worker-model. The latter promises eventual gender equality, especially in economic terms. In the current phase of transition, however, the partial institutionalisation of the adult-worker-model is too piecemeal to coherently overrule older institutions, such as working cultures or gender norms. In effect, the historical layering of institutions creates an asynchronous and incoherent collage of institutional logics. This asynchronicity generates fewer 'kairotic' moments in which enabling conditions 'fit together'. In consequence it has a structural disempowering impact on stakeholders.

The practical result for families is a dominant tendency towards a one-and-half-breadwinner-model (Mahon, 2002). I have argued that widespread experiences of guilt, frustration, or disappointment by parents, especially mothers, suggest that there *is no overarching hegemony* to legitimate this status quo. Furthermore, I have argued that the promotion of an adult-worker-model on the assumption of relatively 'unencumbered' workers withdraws time resources from families. The expanding public childcare system, as I will demonstrate further in the chapter

below, is not ready to balance this recommodification of time. The practical outcome, currently, is not defamilialisation, but a stalled and restricted (part-time) recommodification of women, a shrinking of leisure time for parents, and renewed dependence on wider family to fill the gaps in public childcare provision. Expansions of voluntary work around family suggest that civil society, often in the shape of parents themselves and grandparents, is compensating for some of this resource drain. But the availability of volunteers itself is bound up in the economy of time. Where the unencumbered adult-worker-norm progresses, the availability of voluntary and domestic labour declines, *ceteris paribus*. This dynamic is not just a matter of total hours available, but furthermore a *scheduling problem*, a *predictability problem*, which points back to synchronisation issues between institutions. The different hours of the day and week are not substitutes for one another, because they are differently bound up in institutional and also biological schedules. In consequence, time is not a homogeneous resource like money, and should not be treated as such, in academia or elsewhere.

Whereas the status quo in Germany cannot in any sense be described as acute crisis, the visible tendencies suggest rather clearly that the ideology of the adult-worker-model, as it is institutionalising right now, fails to convincingly promote itself as a pathway to the 'good life'. It is ideologically too trapped in ideas about unencumbered workers, austerity, and global competitiveness, to value care enough to generate a harmonious, sustainable division of work. Seeleib-Kaiser & Toivonen's (2011) account of an alliance between liberal feminists and employers, or Nowak's (2010) account of a passive revolution that co-opted feminist discourses into state policy, suggest that there has been an alliance between liberal feminists and employers to promote new family policies. This political alliance, historically in this moment of skills shortages and austerity, has a limited win-win potential. Individual forms of resistance are visible in families 'stubbornly' sticking to old norms, as well as for parents to consciously choose 'time over money', and withdraw at least partially from the labour market. In times of skills shortages, these occurrences appear sufficient to motivate some regulative and organisational change, at least for professionals. But these political acts are not coherently

organised, and thus very limited in their capacity to address collective time problems of synchronisation.

The expansion of public childcare, addressed in the next chapter, is meant to complement the adult-worker-model by providing the necessary childcare resources to relieve families. But at the moment, this infrastructure is not yet set up. The risk in the meantime is that the adult-worker-ideal, and the gender equality target implicit in it, could lose attractiveness in the political discussion. Pushing for female labour market activation *before* childcare infrastructure is in place risks the credibility of the whole political endeavour as a pathway to a 'good life', because the burden of an incoherent transition is carried by the families: that is, the people who were promised better reconcilability. It is impossible to make a clear diagnosis in the middle of the process, but there is no guarantee that reform efforts will continue to run towards a more sustainable adult-worker-model. A protraction of reforms 'stuck in the middle', stuck in an asynchronous state, could in and of itself become a problem to complete the transition by undermining reform's own legitimacy. As I will argue further in the conclusion, the political alliances and ideas that took reforms to this point may not be ideal to carry through the 'second half', which is the one that requires extra resources, rather than freeing resources: public childcare provision.

5 Public Childcare

In this chapter, I will explore the structures of the German public childcare system from a variety of perspectives. Next to parental leave, public childcare is the important policy shaping reconciliation problems. First, I will introduce a series of historical and contemporary discourses that share a common concern about the targets and deficits in the provision of public childcare (5.1). With respect to the ideational history of public childcare in Germany, I will bring attention to ongoing struggles between supervision and education objectives, and the respective design of institutions. Drawing on this history, I will illustrate the contemporary debate in Germany, which posits as common sense that there is a scarcity of public childcare provision, elucidating a second conceptual need: ‘Kita-Mangel’ (Zeit Online, 2017).

Public childcare deficits are constructed against the background of a particular set of policy reforms on federal- and Länder-level that aimed for an expansion of public childcare. The expansion process was initiated with the Bundestag’s passing of TAG³⁹ in 2004 and KiföG⁴⁰ in 2008. The latter created a *right to public childcare* for all children aged 1-3 that came into effect in 2013. Further reforms took place on the Länder-level, in North Rhine Westphalia (NRW) with the passing of KiBiz (Landtag NRW, 2007). The ‘Krippengipfel’ (crèche summit), a conference between federal government, Länder, and municipalities in 2007 had set the target to create 780,000 new slots until 2013, under the assumption that the parents of 35% of all U3 children would want a slot. A year later, the KiföG (Deutscher Bundestag, 2008a) was passed to bring these agreements underway and facilitate the right to childcare for U3. When the right came into effect in 2013, the statistical authorities calculated that approximately 597,000 slots had been created (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2013). This resulted in a capacity of only 29.3% in March 2013. By that time, the demand was estimated to be even higher, up to 50% in cities, according to the union Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft (GEW, 2013). Therefore, approximately

³⁹ Gesetz zum qualitätsorientierten und bedarfsgerechten Ausbau der Tagesbetreuung für Kinder (Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz – TAG) (Deutscher Bundestag, 2005)

⁴⁰ Gesetz zur Förderung von Kindern unter drei Jahren in Tageseinrichtungen und in Kindertagespflege (Kinderförderungsgesetz – KiföG) (Deutscher Bundestag, 2008a)

180,000 slots or more were needed in 2013. In 2017, calculations by the Deutsches Institut der Wirtschaft suggest that further 293,486 slots were needed, with scarcities particularly notable in Bremen and NRW (Zeit Online, 2017). In NRW, the study suggests, the “Betreuungslücke” (provision gap) comprised 77,459 slots (16.2%) (ibid).

Departing from this assessment slots scarcities in quantitative terms, I will argue throughout this chapter that the problem of public childcare deficits cannot be discussed in ‘objective’ terms only; rather, deficits are constructed differently from the perspectives of parents, practitioners, and providers. Second, therefore, I will map out the key organisational structures and actors in a simple organogram of public childcare in NRW (5.2). It will show which Länder- and district-level governmental and non-governmental organisations exist. Third, I will move on to discuss the shape of the public childcare ‘market’; its selectivities in matching children and slots (5.3.1), its substantive and financial economy (5.3.2), and the temporal problems that emerge under the current regulation of public childcare provision (5.3.3). These sections will focus on connecting formal policy and the perspective of parents. Fourthly, I will address policy enactment from the perspective of practitioners and providers by looking into the governance/management of public childcare (5.4). Here, I will emphasise on the textual nature of governing techniques in the context of ‘new public management’. In total, I will conclude that short resources in care result in insufficient and inflexible public childcare provision which is unable to give parents (mothers) the necessary time autonomy to reconcile family with a career, as described in chapter 4.

5.1 Constructing Public Childcare Deficits

In Germany, the media coverage on public childcare expansion has created a leitmotiv to denounce the lack of slots to meet growing demand: ‘Kita-Mangel’. *Kita*, abbreviated from the formal ‘Kindertagesstätte’, is the contemporary term for Kindergarten. *Mangel*, on the other hand, translates into as many as 105 English

terms (Leo Online Dictionary, no date), which connote a spectrum of meaning including: lack, scarcity, deficit, fault, flaw, or defect.

- How is this public childcare deficit constructed?

The focus of this study is on the contemporary situation, the ‘beginning’ of which can be dated to reforms since 2005, or possibly 1991 if one counts the period after reunification as the political context in which the need for reform emerged.

However, the current construction of issues and purposes of public childcare cannot be understood without a deeper awareness of history: this includes institutional history as much as the history of ideas about pedagogy and the role of the state in childcare; a history of contesting understandings of the purpose of childcare and prioritisation of purposes. To situate the contemporary debate, I will begin by tracing influential ideas and their moments of confrontation in the history of public childcare in Germany.

5.1.1 Historical Perspectives on Public Childcare and Education

The purpose of German public childcare has been contested since its establishment in the 19th century. Conflict occurred over the prioritisation of children’s *supervision* and family welfare against *educational* targets. Supervision (Betreuung) became relevant in the social context of mass poverty of a dispossessed working-class and the separation of workplace and home in the course of the industrial revolution. Government sought to combat social problems that arose as part of these developments: a surge in child mortality, declining education levels, illness, and other harmful conditions that spread in poor urban neighbourhoods (Aden-Grossmann, 2011, p. 16; Berger, 2016, p. 14). These problems were approached by the state as a matter of social hygiene. Public childcare was conceived of as a social welfare service to alleviate the neglect of children that resulted from increased female employment and the absence of time for a family life (Roux, 2002). Public childcare was also utilised to improve school attendance of older siblings by freeing them of their duty to mind younger siblings (Berger, 2016, p. 14).

With regard to the educational purpose of public childcare, controversy persists over the contents and practices that should constitute ‘education’ (Bildung). Two

historical interpretations of education are particularly relevant in shaping ongoing oppositions: education as a natural right to *self-realisation* that has its foundation in Renaissance and humanist thought; and education as the *shaping of others* that emerged with late Enlightenment thought in connection with the idea of the rational individual⁴¹ (Roux, 2002). This opposition can be expanded to different conceptions of the child: Friedrich Fröbel, humanist and founder of the Kindergarten, “finds all seeds of intelligence as well as moral life are enclosed within [the child] and wants to bring those to naturally unfold” (Hagen, cited in Aden-Grossmann, 2011, p. 28). This conception, central in contemporary pedagogy, depicts the child as inherently good, innocent, and capable. In contrast, the sinful child in positive-Christian thought needs to be corrected by a Christian upbringing to find salvation.

These differences have political context and implications. Early influences on pedagogical thought can be traced to Rousseau’s *Emile* (published 1762), which posits the creation of the republican citizen as the primary target of education (Aden-Grossmann, 2011, p. 15). Rousseau already emphasised the importance of play and ‘letting children be children’ (“Kinder Kinder sein lassen”), which inspired Fröbel’s work on pedagogy in the first half of the 19th century. Other pioneering ideas on childcare, such as non-violence (Gewaltfreiheit) and the importance of free play and language acquisition⁴², can be attributed to French revolutionary thought. The ban on Fröbel institutions in 1851 by the Prussian authorities, in reaction to the German revolutionary attempts in 1848-9, was justified with reference to Fröbel’s denial of the original sin (Berger, 2016, p. 29). According to Prussian decree, only a Christian education could enable children to find salvation. Struggles between Christian, democratic, socialist, and nationalist thought on children and the purpose of education materialised in distinct traditions and institutions in the last 200 years

⁴¹ The late enlightenment understanding of education posits a human being who is able to morally improve or be improved through reasoning. This understanding derives from developments in theological thought that increasingly emphasised reason as an aspect of *imago dei*, notably Thomas Aquinas (Dauphinais, 1999). Christian discourses on *imago dei* are bound up within the narrative of original sin and salvation.

⁴² Teaching of a standardised French at the expense of dialects was a key dimension of French nation building executed through the education system. This is a prime example of what Bakhtin understood as centralising forces on language.

of German history that evolve and interact at various points in history. To understand the contemporary debate, it would be excessive to recapitulate this history in full detail. I would still like to summarise the course of some of the central debates and events to provide a general overview of the institutional development of the period from the mid-19th to the end of the 20th century.

In the period after 1848 and during the Second German Empire (1871-1918), two kinds of childcare facility developed: *Kinderbewahranstalten* and *Kindergärten*. The former were Christian institutions, created out of necessity to support working mothers rather than any conviction in the merits of early pedagogy.

Bewahranstalten spread quickly, often founded by women's initiatives and bourgeois Christian charities (Aden-Grossmann, 2011, p. 21). By the end of the 19th century, the majority of institutions were under Protestant or Catholic sponsorship. Children of different classes were cared for separately; their education was oriented to skills perceived as useful to their social status (Berger, 2016, p. 61). Organised in strict temporal schedules, the Bewahranstalt's primary purpose was to install discipline (Aden-Grossmann, 2011, p. 20). Accounts of bodily discipline suggest that *Kinderbewahranstalten* were disciplinary institutions par excellence in the Foucauldian sense (Berger, 2016, pp. 55–81; Foucault, 1977). Clock-time discipline, as Thompson (1967) described for adult workers (2.3.2), is here taught to children. The Bewahranstalt was furthermore a patriarchal institution, teaching the "love for God, king, and father's house" (Berger, 2016, p. 64, author's translation). We can, therefore, understand the Bewahranstalt as a Christian-patriarchal institution for the working classes with an emphasis on supervision (*Betreuung*) and an image of pedagogy as necessary correction of children's dispositions by the means of discipline.

The Kindergarten⁴³, as indicated above, is a product of French republican and, in the German adaptation, Enlightenment and German Idealist thought (Aden-Grossmann, 2011, p. 24). Fröbel recognised the importance of basic trust (*Urvertrauen*), breastfeeding, and more generally the emotional attachment between mother and

⁴³ The term Kindergarten derives from Fröbel's idea that in order to bring children into contact with nature, every childcare facility should have a garden.

child (ibid, p.25-6) that resurfaces in contemporary understandings of attachment theory⁴⁴ and parenting advice. His second decisive contribution was the recognition of free play as a valuable form of autonomous and experiential learning. Fröbel developed material for this purpose, such as building bricks in the shape of cube, cylinder, and sphere (Figure 12).

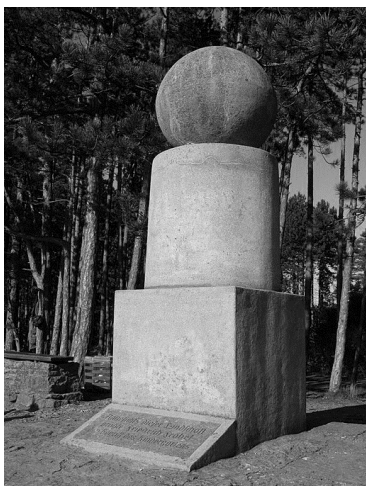


Figure 12 Fröbel Memorial (Unger, no date)

The first Kindergärten were founded by parent initiatives of the wealthy middle classes and liberal-minded aristocracy (Aden-Grossmann, 2011, p. 35). But with a growing working class, economic requirements for skilled labour, and workers' political agency after 1948, the Kindergarten became seen as a model which should be expanded to children of all classes and sexes. This idea was supported by socialists and social democrats, notably by Karl Liebknecht and August Bebel (ibid).

The opposition between ideas institutionalised in the Kinderbewahranstalt and Kindergarten is fundamental for the conflicts about the purpose and quality of public childcare that have evolved since. For the sake of brevity, I will pass over the development of childcare throughout the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich. As one may expect, the ideas formulated by democratic forces during the time of the Weimar Republic were abandoned under the NSDAP Führung, and replaced with a nationalist-authoritarian approach. Concerns about a strong role of the state in childcare today are occasionally explained with reference to the Third Reich and

⁴⁴ Attachment theory was developed in the 1940s by John Bowlby, and refined through various methods. Research focusses on the effects of attachment and separation between children and parents, especially mothers, and long-term effects on attachment capabilities in adults. Critics have pointed out that some of studies were conducted on young monkeys (see Baker, 2010), questioning the ethics around animal rights and the transferability of results. With regard to public childcare, attachment theory is used to problematise the impact of institutional care and separation from the parents on child development. It is further used to develop acclimatisation models to facilitate children's transition between family and institutional care.

GDR, and the ideological indoctrination of children that becomes easier in a centralised system of childcare.

Since the 19th century, the supervision-orientation of West German public childcare has in principle remained unchanged (Roux, 2002). A strong familialist attitude prevailed until the 1960s, when criticism about un- or underqualified childcare practitioners and a lack of pedagogic quality were raised through the *Strukturplan des deutschen Bildungswesens* in 1970, which suggested that family care impeded child development, either through excessive attachment in narrow social relations or overburdened parents (Aden-Grossmann, 2011, p. 93). The debates came up in response to the Sputnik-shock, which put into question Western abilities to compete internationally. Insufficient education was seen as a driver for the perceived lack of competitiveness, especially in technological development. Here we see the first signs of a social investment logic in family policy discourses. The societal importance of ECEC gained political attention in particular through discussions about readiness for school (Schulreife). This resulted in the first large policy initiative for public childcare expansion aimed at children aged 3-6. Coverage increased from 32.8% in 1960 to 78.8% in 1980 (ibid, p.169).

Reforms included quality discussions and the development of the 'situation-oriented approach' (SOA) by the Deutsches Jugendinstitut München (DJI) (Aden-Grossmann, 2011, p. 179). This approach is centrally influential today. The SOA focusses on the development of children's core competencies⁴⁵ to cope with a variety of everyday situations. It was legitimated with reference to an ever more dynamic world, in which static curricula would be outdated quickly. Education aimed at core competencies could be interpreted more flexibly to suit topics as they became relevant. This approach increased expectations and professional requirements towards practitioners, who were tasked to discern the children's interests; assess which themes are important for the children's future in the society; transpose these interests and themes into concrete projects; and document the course of the project together with the children (Aden-Grossmann, 2011, p. 181).

⁴⁵ These are self-awareness, social competence, issue competence, and learning abilities (Aden-Grossmann, 2011, p. 180)

Furthermore, in the SOA, the image of the capable child is complemented with the image of the practitioner as an attachment figure with a reduced hierarchical relation. The latter conception clearly shows the influence of the anti-authoritarian movements that developed as part of the international social movements around 1968, which questioned the authoritarian character of the state, including the education system. The parent-initiative *Kinderläden* movement revolutionised childcare through the development of a new educational style: *laissez-faire*. Children's show of emotions, including aggression and sexuality, was not discouraged anymore. New perceptions informed by second-wave feminism included a rejection of traditional gender roles with regard to work and childcare (Aden-Grossmann, 2011, p. 145). From an organisational perspective, *Kinderläden* were the first childcare institutions to calculate fees on the basis of parent income, which is legal standard today (Aden-Grossmann, 2011, p. 152). Like parent-initiative childcare today, these facilities also improved their financial situation by allocating work to parents as mandatory services. Other novelties included temporal flexibility of opening hours and internal temporal structures, which are central issues in the current debates.

Another impulse for change came from the increase of migrant families in several waves of 'guest workers' during the economic miracle of the 1950-70s. The recognition that *children with migrant backgrounds* are underrepresented in the share of children visiting public childcare facilities, and disadvantaged in terms of educational attainment and social status, has put them into a position of special attention (Finetti, 2018). The particularly low scores of children with migrant background in PISA studies, according to Becker & Lauterbach (2004), have been a central reason for government to become more actively involved in pre-school childcare. The recent lowering of public childcare entry ages must therefore be seen as a biopolitical attempt to prevent social problems associated with insufficient education. Parental care is purposefully being complemented (or even substituted) by institutional care. Special programs to enhance language education and test language skills in young children must be interpreted in light of the popular idea that a lack of German linguistic and cultural abilities in migrant children (and

parents) is responsible for their 'lagging behind'. A similar comparison can be made between working class and middle-class children. Debates over opportunity structures echo the purpose of education Rousseau sought in the constitution of good citizens and civil participation, but they also construct the worker and migrant child as inferior and in need of positive discrimination. This idea has been institutionalised in so-called *Plus-Kitas*, which are set up in areas with high numbers of social benefit recipients and receive extra funds for language support (Landtag NRW, 2007, §16a).

The renewed focus for political intervention and reform after the publication of the PISA studies in 2001 has espoused two targets: to improve childcare quality and to expand coverage. Following a social investment logic, the current reforms are a crisis-response to PISA, much in the same way that the 1970's reforms were a crisis-response to the Sputnik-shock. Their realisation takes us into the contemporary debate.

5.1.2 The Contemporary Debate (2005-today)

Contemporary debates on public childcare revolve around the expansion reforms TAG (Deutscher Bundestag, 2005) and KiföG (Deutscher Bundestag, 2008a), the latter of which implemented the *right to public childcare* for children aged 1-3 (Ü3)⁴⁶. The TAG and KiföG constituted an expansion and amendment of the 8th book of the Code of Social Law (SGB VIII), the central source of child and youth welfare regulation in Germany. A series of implementation acts were introduced since 1990 in all federal states. In NRW, changes affecting childcare provision were mainly effected in 1991 through the Kindergartengesetz GTK (Landtag NRW, 1991), replaced in 2007 by the Kinderbildungsgesetz KiBiz (Landtag NRW, 2007). Below, I will focus on the KiBiz (5.3).

A right to public childcare for children aged 3-6 (Ü3) already came into effect in 1996, as a consequence of debates 1992-1995 over the constitutionality of the abortion ban, StGB §218 (Deutscher Bundestag, 1992, 1995). Conservatives

⁴⁶ Common distinction for children in public childcare: Ü3 (unter drei) means under-three, age group 1-3; and Ü3 (über drei) means over three, age group 3-6.

supported the right as an incentive for mothers to refrain from abortion. Simultaneously, a greater commitment to public childcare facilitated a compromise during German reunification (Evers, Lewis and Riedel, 2005). In East Germany, coverage had already reached about 80% for U3 and 95% for Ü3 in the 1980s, as part of the socialist adult-worker-model (Hank, Tillmann and Wagner, 2001). Reunification brought about a decline in coverage rates in the East that can be attributed to a political will to indiscriminately expand Western institutions, public financing problems, and widespread female unemployment after reunification (ibid). In West Germany, as noted above, the Ü3 expansion was underway since 1970: coverage had increased from 32.8% in 1960 to 78.8% in 1980. By 2010 coverage levels have evened out at approximately 93% (Bock-Famulla, Lange and Strunz, 2015; Statistisches Bundesamt, no date).

A key difference between both expansions is that the Ü3 right to childcare only came into effect in the 1990s, when coverage rates were already close to demand. Hence the Ü3 expansion had 50 years to develop the necessary infrastructure. The timing between formal right and infrastructure expansion is different in the current U3 expansion. Here, the right to public childcare *precedes* infrastructure expansion. And this is deeply problematic in terms of expectation management.

U3 coverage rates in West Germany were minimal for a long time. In 2008, when the U3 right to childcare was passed, coverage reached only 17.6% on German average, with large differences between West (12.1%) and East (40.9%) (Statistisches Bundesamt, no date). The lowest levels were reached in Lower Saxony and NRW with a U3 coverage of 9.1% and 9.3% respectively, while the highest levels of 52.7% were achieved in Saxony-Anhalt. When the right became active in 2013, the national coverage had increased to 29.3%, and NRW had become the laggard with 19.9%. Currently, U3 coverage rates have reached 26.3% in NRW (2017).

In a simple comparison of numbers, the speed of the current U3 expansion is much faster than that of the Ü3 expansion. However, one can argue that the relative speed between the Ü3 and U3 expansions is not a very significant indicator when it comes to assessing public opinion. The point argued here, instead, is that by

establishing a formal right to childcare *before* delivering the infrastructure for this policy, the government created a public conception of a slow or lacking U3 expansion. The simplest hypothesis to explain a public childcare deficit, therefore, is that *reforms raised public expectations much faster than they could deliver the necessary infrastructure*. The relevant scale of comparison is not between U3 and Ü3 expansions, but between expectations raised *now* and infrastructure delivered *now*. Only 'now' is relevant to current parents.

Inga: "well when we did not find a childcare slot, I did ask myself how that can be in Cologne [...] was practically exactly the time (2013) where [the right to public childcare] would have applied to [our daughter], and . we had thought great, but in reality it became clear to us very fast, no, pff, that has no relevance for us, because . because it is not going to help us" (I29, 35:48-37:59)

Focussing on the city of Cologne, the central site of this study, the local youth authorities estimated a demand for 40% U3 coverage, which has been corrected upwards to 50-55% in recent years (I2). The planned provision U3 quota for 2017/18 in Cologne is forecasted by the local authority at 42.6%, including places in commercial care centres and home-based publicly financed day-care (KTP). This illustrates the substantive gap between U3 demand and supply, which can currently be estimated at ca. 7.4-12.4%, or approximately 2400-4000 slots⁴⁷ for the year 2017/18. The data underlines that public childcare scarcity is not a subjective experience of parents alone, but a fundamental structural problem in urban centres.

The right to U3 childcare must be seen as an ideal and a catalyst, rather than a genuine availability of services at the moment. Misunderstandings emerge where the formal right to public childcare and the substantive capacity of the public childcare system get confused. Such misunderstandings in everyday life result in gaps between expectations (plans) and experiences (outcomes). This phenomenon was more likely in the time immediately after the reforms. Since then, a greater

⁴⁷ Assuming 42,6% of coverage in 2017/18 as 13684 places, this suggests 100% of U3 children as 32122 total in 2017/18, of which 50% and 55% respectively (demand forecast) make a gap of 7.4% (2377) and 12.4% (3983). Source: Beschlussvorlage Jugendhilfeausschuss Stadt Köln 4110/2016, from 27.12.2016.

awareness over the discrepancy has spread. Nevertheless, the uncertainties in this ongoing transition period create a problem in the adjustment of interlinking practices and expectations. In Bourdieu's terminology, the correspondence between objective chances to have a childcare slot and subjective expectations thereto, between field and habitus, is disrupted. Following Bourdieu's theory (2.2.4) suggests that the experience of time in the expansion process as lag or slowness (waiting) is a result of this disruption between expectations and daily experience.

Understanding public childcare deficits as a social construct raises the question of *how* it is constructed: Which concepts are used to describe it? How is it measured and communicated? Also: how are the 'objective' conditions of childcare generated, and why can supply not match demand? I will address the substantive economy of public childcare in section 5.3.2.

Above, I have addressed quantitative measures for childcare policy outcomes: coverage rates, the percentage of children in public childcare, and coverage quotas (Betreuungsquoten). The number of slots available relative to the number of all children in the relevant age group are important as measuring tools in the policy implementation process. The quotas function as targets for the district youth authorities, who are tasked by the national and federal governments to operationalise the public childcare expansion. Their institutional link to municipal and federal finances and enforcement systems makes quantitative indicators particularly consequential, as I will elaborate below (5.3.2). Examining media accounts, however, suggests that the speed, coverage and other quantitative indicators to measure the expansion (e.g. Zeit Online, 2017) only tell half of the story. In fact, concerns about the quality of public childcare take up just as much space in the news coverage. The Kölner Stadtanzeiger, one of the main local newspapers in Cologne, depicts quality improvement as the politically neglected complement of the quantitative expansion of childcare slots (e.g. Greuel, 2016; Gümüs, 2016; Meier and Ringendahl, 2016). News articles such as these popularised key results of the *Länderreport Frühkindliche Bildungssysteme* (Bock-Famulla, Lange and Strunz, 2015) that indicated substantial quality heterogeneity in German Kitas.

Contemporary discourse on childcare quality can be roughly split up in three streams: the quantity and qualification of staff and related quality of pedagogical practice; the condition of facilities, health & safety, and food quality; and – perhaps most central in the public debate – the impact on child wellbeing and development of family-style care versus different types of institutional care. This last debate, which I will revisit in depth in section 5.3.3.1, is informed by psychological discourses of child development, which point to the importance of stable attachment figures in early life. These raise concerns about separating children from parents too early and placing them into an environment with fluctuating carers. Whereas it is widely thought important to place children into care with other children, the age at which this is considered appropriate has been lowered by policy from three to one. This adjustment has not become hegemonic in the wider population. Albeit U3 care is taken up increasingly, as implied in the discussion of childcare slot shortages above, parents and practitioners are often conflicted about the timing of placing children into public care. U3 public childcare is often promoted as a ‘good’ measure for families. Government-issued documents (Landtag NRW, 2007; BMFSFJ, 2011a) indicate clearly that public childcare is intended to improve social equality: gender equality for mothers through improved reconcilability between family and work, and more equal educational opportunities for children. “Breaking the link between social origin and educational success” through public childcare is meant to produce better skilled future workers (BDA, 2012). In opposition, however, U3 public childcare can also be said to crowd out family time by enabling employers to make higher demands on parent employee availability. Childcare practitioners, in particular, resist the idea of childcare as a means to the reproduction of future workers at the expense of a pedagogy oriented by children’s interests. The conflict between these positions is not so much ‘modern-traditional’, as pro or against an expansion of public life at the cost of private life, or put differently, the expansion of the *market society* and *social investment* logics into early childhood (Polanyi, 2001; Jenson, 2009).

That market logics play a role in reforms is clearly visible, yet it would be misleading to speak of a privatisation of institutional childcare. I will elaborate this in section

5.3.2.5. To situate the reform and understand the organisational landscape in which administration and politics takes place, I will now discuss the structure of the German welfare sector.

5.2 Organisational Landscape

The German welfare system is centrally based on the cooperation between state agencies and non-statutory welfare providers. This cooperation between actors is central to public childcare provision, and has been discussed as a key feature of corporatism (Zimmer, 1999). Their organisation on different spatial levels, usually aligned to the federal system, creates a certain hierarchy of organisations. Figure 13 provides an overview.

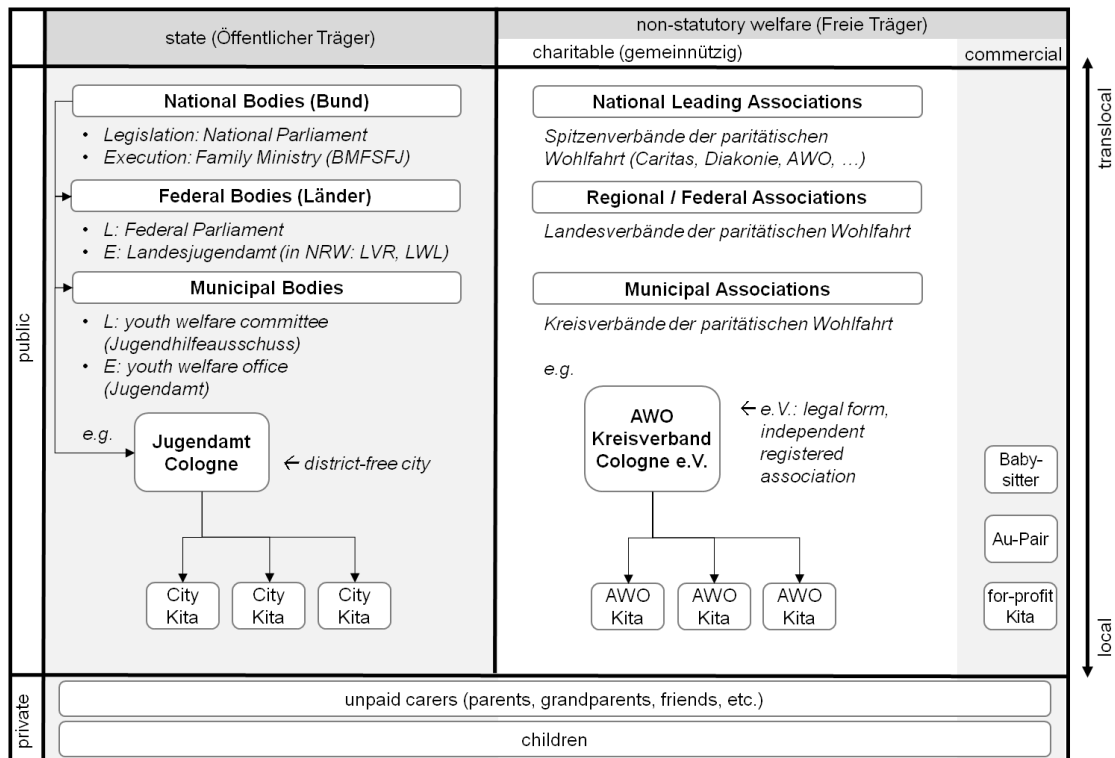


Figure 13 Public Childcare Organogram

One can distinguish different types of childcare provision on various dimensions. The categorisation into private and public (far left column) is somewhat too abstract. Whereas there is a pure private space for childcare, the family (bottom row), there are three gradually different types of public childcare provision (top row): direct state provision, non-statutory charitable provision, and 'private' for-

profit public childcare. The latter is distinct by not being government funded at all, and therefore not having to comply with regulation to the same extent. For-profit Kitas do not adhere to the democratically determined pricing system that all other public childcare institutions are subject to. In other words, for-profit Kitas are significantly more expensive, and tend to offer a more ‘exclusive product’, which often implies more staff, more flexible opening times, and more offers to the child.

Elena: “...that were I believe 1500€ per child, and for the second child there would have been a 10% discount ... and then that are, eh, 2700€ for childcare, which one must have to spare in a month. I mean, this would have included left-handed⁴⁸ organic food and baby yoga. That is the next question, does one need that? But the flexible opening hours, the concept they had, that I would have liked. But ehm, well that we cannot afford” (125, 49:29 - 51:23)

In the remaining analysis, I will not discuss for-profit Kitas, because they remain marginal at less than 3% of all Kitas (Bock-Famulla, Strunz and Löhle, 2017). My sample does not cover au-pairs; it does include parents’ perspectives on babysitters, as briefly discussed above (4.4.2.1). The focus of analysis will be on the two tiers of public childcare providers (state, charitable) that are publicly funded and thus fall under the closer regulation of the state.

Two parameters are important to understand how childcare is organised and financed. First, the location of a Kita within a federal state and a district matter to understand which regulation applies to it in the first place. Second, the provider type (Träger) of a Kita determines how a Kita is financed: by whom, to what percentage, and in connection with which requirements.

- Arbeiterwohlfahrt (AWO)
Worker’s Welfare Association
- Deutsche Caritasverband (Caritas)
German Catholic Welfare Association
- Deutsche Paritätische Wohlfahrtsverband (Der PARITÄTISCHE or DPW)
German ‘Equal’ Welfare Association, an umbrella association itself
- Deutsche Rote Kreuz (DRK)
German Red Cross
- Diakonie Deutschland (Diakonie)
Protestant Welfare Association Germany
- Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle der Juden in Deutschland (ZWST)
Welfare Office for Jews in Germany

Figure 14 Non-Statutory Welfare Providers

⁴⁸ Left-handed, or laevorotatory, lactic acid refers to a dietary trend.

Non-statutory Kitas are frequently affiliated to one of the six large welfare associations (Figure 14).

The weight of providers varies regionally (Bock-Famulla, Lange and Strunz, 2015, p. 34)⁴⁹: the state runs the absolute majority of Kitas in the federal state Brandenburg (52.4%), whereas it only supplies 0.9% in the city-state Hamburg. Between these extremes, the share of state provision varies greatly, and averages nationally at 33.1%. The non-statutory providers' presence varies between regions along historically-constituted socio-geographical patterns. For example, Catholic providers are scarce in East Germany (2.3%), which is historically Protestant or socialist-atheist. In West-Germany, 21.6% of all Kitas are Catholic; especially in the southern federal states (e.g. Bavaria 30.9%), but also in NRW (27.1%). Protestant providers are strongest in the North, in particular in Schleswig-Holstein (31.7%).

Non-statutory welfare providers were already an indispensable pillar of German welfare in the Second German Empire (1871-1918), and the state depended on their financial power and volunteer labour (Aden-Grossmann, 2011, p. 43). The roots of these organisations lie in the social divisions that constituted German society in the 19th century. After World War Two, until the 1960s, the welfare associations were re-established in West Germany under the principle of 'hard' subsidiarity (Zimmer, 1999). This was done through exclusive privileges (political participation, financial support) that created a protected market for their activities. The growth of new public movements and self-help groups in the 1970s led to a crisis of legitimacy of the corporatist arrangement in the 1980s, in response to which privileges were gradually revoked (ibid). At that time the DPW opened up to accept grassroots organisations as members, thus becoming the fastest-growing association. In the childcare context, the DPW today acts as an umbrella organisation for parent-initiative and smaller independent Kitas. Approximately a third of all parent-initiatives are affiliated to the DPW (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2017d). In the 1990s subsidiarity was deinstitutionalised, when government support was restructured from lump-sum funding or statutory grants towards

⁴⁹ Latest compilation of data that crosses providers with federal states. National averages in 2017 are almost the same.

predetermined rates for cost reimbursement (Zimmer, 1999, p. 44). More actors became eligible for support.

The welfare system has been undergoing an “incremental marketisation” (Bode and Brandsen, 2014). Organisations became more “business-like” and competitive under imperatives of ‘new public management’ (see 5.4). As a result of more targeted government funding, core business activities are provided as a service to the government, and underlie respective standards and accounting responsibilities. Additional services in line with associations’ traditional ideological roots have become increasingly provided by volunteers. Advocates of a diverse civil society have criticised that more centralised standards in service provision lead to a certain “homogenisation” (Bode and Brandsen, 2014, p. 1060) of services and providers. However, findings in my study that reveal the ongoing importance of ideological roots, irrespective of standards. These roots continue to inform selectivities between parents and local providers (see 5.3.1).

Overall, the shift away from hard subsidiarity has weakened the economic position of the welfare associations. Their political influence as agenda setters and local partners, however, is still very important on local and translocal levels of government. In Cologne, for example, childcare reform implementation in the 2000-10s was negotiated in the “AK80”, a taskforce which comprised representatives from the major welfare associations and the city youth authorities (I34). This mode of governance corresponds to the ‘softer’ principle of subsidiarity codified in federal law (SGB VIII), which states that statutory and non-statutory providers should “work together in partnership” and that statutory providers should only become active where non-statutory provision cannot be arranged (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012a, §4 1-2). The important facet to emphasise is the determining local role of corporatist governance (Figure 15).

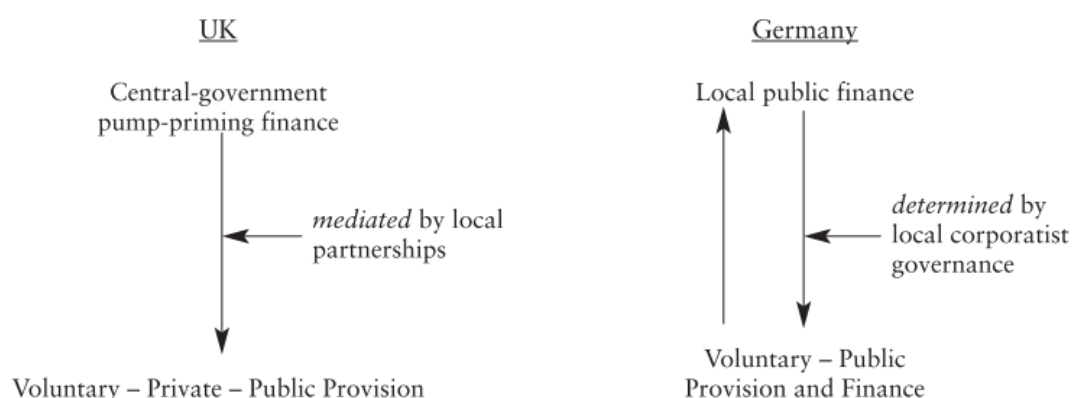


Figure 15 German and UK Childcare Modes of Governance (taken from Evers, Lewis and Riedel, 2005, p. 205)

Evers, Lewis, & Riedel (2005) suggest that the high level of decentralised decision-making in the German system is responsible for a slower expansion of childcare slots than in the UK. Their critique falls in line with broader concerns about the static or conservative tendency in the corporatist system. On the other hand, the authors propose that change, once agreed upon, is more lasting and sustainable than in a more spontaneous market-driven system.

“The German model is one in which it is much more difficult to achieve a rapid policy change. But the system is one in which change that is achieved is likely to be lasting and to reflect local preferences in respect of the nature of provision.” (Evers, Lewis and Riedel, 2005, p. 206)

Furthermore, the authors argue that since the right to childcare for Ü3 the central government has incrementally increased its influence. They contextualise this shift in the central government target to increase female labour market participation, which supersedes local preferences to how children should be raised.

Lastly, writing before major reforms in the late 2000s, Evers et al. did not anticipate a right to childcare for U3. But the Parliament agreed the policy in 2008. A decade later the hurdles regarding the U3 expansion are not so much ‘parliamentary’, but rather embedded in the interplay between regulation and real economic factors, most notably skills shortages (see 5.3.2). It is important to note that whereas market logics increasingly affect public childcare organisation and funding (see 5.3.2, 5.4), this partial marketisation has not replaced corporatist governance between state and non-statutory providers.

In the next section, I will illustrate the North-Rhine Westphalian case in more detail. Throughout this research project, I followed the methodological sequence of Institutional Ethnography: starting with parents' shared experiences, and then drawing out the mechanisms which generate these experiences. To make this rather complex field more accessible to the reader, however, I will present the results in a different order: first the mechanisms effected through institutional selectivities around slot allocation (5.3.1); second, formal regulation and substantive economic conditions that act as preconditions (5.3.2); and then the temporal experiences of participants that emerge from these preconditions (5.3.3).

5.3 Public Childcare in NRW: The KiBiz Case

Public childcare is provided in two basic organisational forms: Kindertagesstätten (Kitas) and Kindertagespflege (KTP). The former is simply the formal term for a Kindergarten or Krippe (crèche) – a public place where children ages 1-6 are taken by their parents during the day and minded by trained professionals in larger groups. KTP, meanwhile, is a format of childcare where children are brought to another person's home during the day. KTP comes from Sweden ("Dagmammans"), and was first introduced in Germany through a pilot project by the family ministry in 1974-79 (Schumann, 2013). Initially organised privately, KTP has become publicly institutionalised, notably through the TAG reform in 2005, which formally recognised KTP as a form of public childcare equal to Kitas. KTP is seen as a more family-like style of care than Kita. A KTP carer today has undergone training and is subsidised by the state; however, their training of 160h is substantially less extensive than the 5 year apprenticeship educators (ErzieherInnen⁵⁰) in Kitas complete. In consequence, many parents do not view KTP as an equal service to Kita.

The institutionalisation of KTP needs to be historically contextualised in the German reunification, which increased demand for public childcare through a cultural spill

⁵⁰ ErzieherIn is a protected occupational term, connected to an apprenticeship, which in the following I will translate as educator. I will use the term practitioner to include other qualified staff, such as university graduates with pedagogic degrees.

over of the socialist adult-worker-model. As mentioned before, the right to childcare for Ü3 had been passed as part of the reunification process. Given a growing realisation that Kitas were unable to expand fast enough to meet demand, KTP provided a solution (I50). The reforms of the mid-2000s further expanded public childcare provision, especially for U3. This shift in policy, driven by a female labour market activation agenda, has espoused a right to public childcare for any child past its 1st birthday. The problem – where expectations and reality clash – is the scarcity of public childcare slots available: The right is better understood as a catalyst for change, not a de-facto guarantee for public services.

Furthermore, the inclusion of younger age groups into Kitas has raised a public debate over the requirements and quality of ECEC. Therein different provider ideologies, state targets, and pedagogical perspectives meet everyday parental experiences of irreconcilability. A key issue is the quantity of time U3 children should spend in public care, in terms of child development and happiness, and in conflict to the temporal demands employers make on parents, especially mothers. This debate translates into struggles around opening-times and flexible service uptake. Put differently, the traditional rhythms of the Kita's daily schedule, respective to the availability of mothers during the day (their work schedule), and the *predictability* of these schedules, are weakening, diversifying, and not fitting together with pedagogic perspectives on good childcare.

The political struggle over which fraction – fathers, mothers, their employers, public childcare practitioners, or children – should give to the other side's temporal interests is shaped by a scarcity of resources for care: this is clearest in the skills shortage of childcare professionals, but also in adequate public spaces for childcare (buildings, land), financial resources in Kita setup and operation, and managerial overhead (see 5.3.2). These scarcities are in large part caused by a longstanding political disinterest in promoting childcare as an attractive work environment, paired with an underfinancing that results from austerity budgets and new public management strategies (see 5.4).

In order to understand this overall dynamic, it is easier to start with and focus on the quantitatively more important pillar of public childcare, the Kita. In the following subsections I will explain the three most important conflicts arising in the social relations around Kitas, which are the slot allocation (5.3.1), the financing and real economy of care provision (5.3.2), and the temporal balance between parental and institutional care (5.3.3). Together, these three dimensions form a layered conflict around supply and demand. The temporal dimension is obviously not practically separate, but is particularly important in the experience of parents. Emphasising conflicted temporal experience and asynchronous social structures, as addressed in chapter 4 and further so below, this study reaffirms why social policy research needs to address time (Heitkötter and Schneider, 2004; Bertram, 2009).

5.3.1 Slot Allocation: Providers, Selections, and Diversity

The corporatist decentralised system discussed above has created a variety of childcare providers on the ground-level which collectively are unable to meet demand for public childcare. Given this situation, parents employ a series of strategies to increase the chance of getting a public childcare slot (Kitaplatz). Respectively, Kitas are tasked with the selection of children. Cologne presents an uncommon case, in that city-provided slots are allocated centrally by the youth welfare agency (Jugendamt) rather than the individual Kitas, as is usually the case. But since non-statutory Kitas are not included in this central allocation platform, it has to date (status 2017) been necessary for parents to apply for childcare in various places. Demands to centralise application processes through an online platform are currently being set up by the city (little-bird project). It must be noted, however, that while unifying the application process for parents at first glance, the upcoming platform will not affect the decision-making behind the screen.

Decisions over placements in Cologne are made by the youth welfare agency for city-run facilities, and by the local managers of all other facilities. The city employs a first come – first serve system, run online, in which parents can select one preferred Kita (I2). The online application sends an email to the council worker's collective account. The applicants are then allocated to the waiting list of their preferred Kita

manually. If a placement in this Kita is not possible, the council worker in charge will try to find alternatives within the vicinity of the child's residence. The maximal acceptable distance between Kita and residence has been legally determined at 5km, after court appeals by parents challenged placements decisions (Verwaltungsgericht Köln, 2013). Council workers enact this task with aid of Google Maps, trying to find a Kita within a 5km radius of the child's residence, including public transport or walking opportunities that keep commuting time within 30min (I2). The city Kita application process is digitalised through the online portal for parents to input children's details (such as date of birth, address, date from which childcare is sought), but the placement process itself is not automated. It is carried out by 19 council workers in full-time positions. The only formal exception to the first come – first serve rule is the immediate placement of younger siblings into the same Kita as older siblings, as long as vacancies in that Kita exist. According to the youth welfare agency, this centralised placement process aids them in realising the placement quotas set by the city government under the right to childcare, which legally obliges all municipalities to provide U3 childcare according to demand since 2013 (Deutscher Bundestag, 2008a).

Overall, due to the simplest criteria of timing and location, the city's placement system could be described as relatively fair, treating all applicants as effectively equal. A lack of awareness that *application timing* is important, however, can affect for instance recent migrants' inclusion into the system, since they often cannot apply at the 'right time'. Council workers have recognised problems with communicating how the application system works (I2). In effect this means that all parents 'in the know' go online as fast as possible after the birth of their child to apply. Unaware 'late-comers' run a substantial risk of leaving empty-handed.

Anna	Yes, well . I had this list, all then, and phoned it down . uh, went there . city, Church, also in other districts of course, so across cologne, also private facilities, parent initiatives . trawled through everything . and there was simply no slot. The people were friendly: uh yes . maybe in a year, or something . but we actually need something now, immediately.
Nina	Were you aware in advance that this is such a problem?
Anna	Nah! . well uh . I know uh at the application uh . at one Kita, there was a pregnant woman with me. We were still joking somehow how . and she: yes, I

	didn't yet want to either . but my husband said I should, and so forth. Well yes, there I have to say I approached this matter somewhat naively
--	---

(I22, 35:57-37:53)

Non-statutory Kitas select children locally and according to their own rules. They are not covered by the central city application system – although this is supposed to change, as mentioned above. Currently parents need to fill in application forms at each non-statutory Kita they consider (status 2017). From the perspective of Kitas, parents/children are selected based on a relatively small set of variables, some of which have more weight depending on provider background. Generally, the attendance of older siblings has a very strong impact on the chance of another child to attend the same Kita. One manager of a small Kita I interviewed was only taking younger siblings that year (I17). Other common factors are the proximity of Kita and residence (same district), parent status (single parent/couple), many children in the family, disabled children, and other factors that create a situation for parents that can be understood as 'hardship'. Often these criteria are assessed in a point system, which result in a ranking of children. The highest ranked children receive the available slots. The date of application, which is essential for the city-run Kitas, is usually less important for the non-statutory Kitas, as long as it precedes the in-house selection process. The timing of this varies from Kita to Kita, and can occur up to a year in advance.

In confessional Kitas, membership to the respective religion, and engagement in the local parish/faith centre make a crucial factor. Religious provision is mostly relevant for the Christian confessions. In Germany, 33% of all Kitas and children educated therein are nominally Christian – the same percentage as statutory providers (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2017d). In NRW, Caritas and Diakonie have a joint market share of 43.4% (Bock-Famulla, Lange and Strunz, 2015). In Cologne, my own calculations⁵¹ suggest a percentage of approximately 23% for Christian Kitas in 2016-17. Given this substantial share, the selection procedures of the confessional Kitas have a significant impact on the overall selectivities that determine which families have effective access to public childcare.

⁵¹ based on municipal statistics and planned expansions by the Jugendhilfeausschuss Köln 2015

Imke: "...well day-care centre, sure. But especially a Protestant kindergarten was important to me as a priestess... she is being guided towards the faith, through the services-children's Church services. Sundays in the parish, or there are biblical readings sometimes. I like how the people are there, the team itself, yes, there one notices they have a Protestant consciousness, and yes, treat the children in a special way. So that was very clearly what we absolutely wanted" (I24, 1:03:49-1:04:38)

Activities described by Imke, like children's services, are common in confessional Kitas. Religion hence matters in the day-to-day of education, and not just abstractly in the affiliation of childcare facilities. Parents of different cultural persuasions select or deselect confessional Kitas, based on their own preferences how their children should be educated. But furthermore, they anticipate the selection criteria which the Kitas themselves employ, given the overall scarcity of slots:

Inga (lesbian): "we applied everywhere, well . yes, if it fit at all with the opening hours . so, uh, and the naturally . we are . both not in the Church, that is without confession . and then some were already eliminated . well not . officially, but they told us the work with a point system, and so on . there it was clear that we won't be accommodated." (I29, 24:45-25:13)

Johanna (Kita manager): "We have a ranking . eh childcare facility, because we are Protestant, parishioners are favoured, there are 2 points, no, there are 3 points for one lives in the parish catchment area, there are 2 points for being Protestant – that one member of the family, father, mother, child, or custodian, ... well that one of the three is Protestant, for that there are 2 – actually there are 2 points for each Christian affiliation, then there are em, points for em other social aspects, eh single parent, or any hardships [...] If there is a draw between many ehm, then it is looked again with more differentiation em, then one takes, I say it now that maliciously, but I always say it so maliciously, then one takes not the mixed-confession families but the pure-bred [reinrassisch] Protestant families . yes, even though these have the same point status, but – or – there one looks again a bit closer – is the family engaged in the parish, but that is, yes that is the only . there, I find that actually always quite transparent and presentable ... and therefore we have . actually therefore we never have muslim children, because there are always enough Protestant children being reproduced" (I17, 1:12:53-1:15:19)

Several parents who were non-religious, homosexual, or otherwise did not perceive themselves in the target-group of Churches had dismissed confessional Kitas immediately from their search patterns. In two cases within my study, a Christian institution admitted non-religious children. Whereas this is not entirely unusual, as statistics show, both parents were very surprised to receive the slot. Anna (I22) said in the interview that she had asked an educator why she had received the slot, and was informed that the Kita management sought to present *diversity*. Given her husband's and son's Turkish surname, Anna thought her family had been selected as the 'least other' family to fulfil that idea of diversity. Her husband grew up in Germany; both of them are employed in media and middle-class. Irrespective of the possible accuracy of her statement from the perspective of the Kita, her construction nevertheless exemplifies an intersectional, hierarchical thinking present in German culture, and how ideas therein can be drawn upon to reflect selectivities relevant in childcare provision. An interviewee in a position to be widely aware of selection procedures, who prefers to remain anonymous, expressed this idea quite starkly, when he cynically commented on local provider discretion in how children were selected: "they are keeping their Kita *clean*" (Die halten sich ihre Kita sauber!).

The matching processes between families and Kitas is the obvious context in which selectivities become visible. In Cologne, due to the centralised city system, it becomes particularly visible how different providers have the power to shape selection – but that parents themselves also employ a set of ideas about education and cultural identity that makes selection a mutual process.

In direct comparison, the centralised city system is at first glance more likely to produce fair and transparent placement outcomes than the decentralised, local systems. For the former, only timing and residence matter. The stratification of urban space, perhaps irrevocably, perpetuates inequality between rich and poor neighbourhoods. Compared to the point systems of other providers, however, the central allocation is nevertheless less discriminatory. This can have positive effects on equal access, such as in the non-importance of religious affiliation. However, it can also have negative impacts for people who receive preferential treatment due

to hardship. Hence, the two systems have divergent client groups who benefit from the selection mechanisms.

As I will discuss next, financial regulation and economic conflicts between stakeholders reinforce the institutional ensembles in which selectivities become entrenched (5.3.2). Beyond the application process, there are structural configurations that add less noticeable selective mechanisms. Temporal structures and mismatches between them are one kind of such ‘subtle’ mechanisms (5.3.3).

5.3.2 Financial Regulation and the Political Economy of Childcare

Municipalities and federal states, who finance the largest part of all public childcare, in NRW between 88% and 96% of operating costs⁵³, have to comply with austerity debt limits. The consolidation of households limits the space for investments, notably wage increases. Following the KiBiz reform (Landtag NRW, 2007), each Kita provider – despite being a non-profit organisation – is required to raise a certain percentage of their operating costs (Trägeranteil). This share has to be raised through donations or other lines of business in which profit-making is permitted. The level of contributions depends on the institutional affiliation of the welfare provider (Landtag NRW, 2007; Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2015a), as shown in Table 3, column ‘provider’.

Affiliation	Provider	Jugendamt	federal subsidy to Jugendamt	Coverage NRW
Municipality	21%	79%	30,0%	24,8%
Church	12%	88%	36,5%	43,4%
Parent Initiative	4%	96%	38,5%	28,9%
Other ⁵²	9%	91%	36,0%	
For-profit	100%	-	-	2,9%

Table 3 Kita Operating Cost Distribution

⁵² The category “other” refers to non-profit actors such as welfare associations (AWO, DRK) considered by the government as ‘poor welfare providers’, a status the Catholic and Protestant welfare bodies have been lobbying to attain. Their campaigns have resulted in Kita closures since the Land and municipalities considered themselves unable to cover these additional costs under austerity households.

⁵³ Excluding parent contributions, which vary between municipalities. See 5.3.2.1.

The rest of the operating cost is covered by the municipal youth welfare agency (Jugendamt), which in turn receives a federal subsidy. There are additional national and federal funds for investments to expand coverage, for example new buildings and renovation to accommodate U3 needs.

For-profit Kitas do not receive state funding. This has caused a certain amount of concern under which circumstances Betriebskitas (4.3.2.3) should be subsidized. At the time of the interviews, the SPD-Green NRW government favoured the cooperation of private companies with non-profit welfare providers. In such cases the private company pays the welfare provider's cost share and the welfare provider runs the Kita non-profit. This helps welfare providers expand their supply without having to raise additional funds themselves, and companies to ensure care for their employees. At the same time, childcare remains non-profit. The current CDU-FDP coalition government may support a different agenda, since the liberal FDP has long criticised Betriebskitas as overregulated and insufficiently attractive for enterprises. The early reform proposals for the KiFög, formulated by the CDU, suggested an equal treatment of non-profit and for-profit providers. Despite a neo-liberal influence palpable in how childcare has become marketised, the left political spectrum (notably SPD) and influential organisations like Bertelsmann have not supported a full privatisation, and averted respective reforms (Deutscher Bundestag, 2008b, p. 19254; GEW, 2008). Arguments in this debate, which peaked around the passing of KiFög in 2008, ranged from the economical perspective that information asymmetry between parents and providers does not sufficiently ensure a functioning market, to the standpoint that for-profit childcare results in social polarisation, worse education for poor children, and that consequently childcare "does not belong on the stock exchange" (Diana Golze (Die Linke), Deutscher Bundestag, 2008b).

The major current issue and reason for reform demands by providers in NRW is the perpetual underfinancing of childcare. Whereas the previous policy (GTK, 1992-2007) covered the de-facto costs of a Kita within certain limits, the KiBiz (2008-ongoing) introduced a per-child lump sum funding (Kindpauschale), which basically calculates the hours of care booked per child (25, 35, or 45 hours per week). This

policy has effectively introduced a market logic to the sector without privatising it, because the guarantee of public refinancing has been exchanged for a refinancing conditional on service provision. In theory, Kitas now need to compete for parents to place their child there. In practice, the current slot scarcity has created a producer-led market in which parents compete for Kita slots. Nevertheless, childcare managers were called upon to introduce market thinking to their employees, and understand childcare as a service provided to parents (I34). The lump-sum funding incurs problems for Kitas, because time for administration, team communication, preparation, and documentation were not adequately considered (see 5.4). The simultaneous expansion of opening hours (during lunch, afternoons) made it necessary to place these ancillary tasks within the opening hours of the Kita. This means that some educators take care of all children, while others carry out these additional tasks – the time for which is not recognised in the accounting formulae (I51).

Whereas these time-recognition issues create discontents among practitioners, the more immediate problem from a managerial perspective is the underfinancing of wage costs. The legislator assumed an annual 1.5% rise of wages and provided an automatic mechanisms to increase budgets accordingly. But recent tariff agreements with practitioners after several rounds of strike have resulted in an average of 2.5% annual rises between 2014 and 2017. This leaves a gap in wage financing of about 1% per annum. According to Volland-Dörmann (I34), chief executive of the AWO Köln, the Kindpauschale is particularly damaging for small facilities. Larger providers can legally redistribute funds between their small and large Kitas in one municipality to buffer financial shortages, but small providers are unlikely to be able to keep pay-rolls up or remain within tariff agreements. Whereas the Land has provided one-off remedies, the money is meant to arrive at a time Volland-Dörmann judged “too late” to keep these Kitas “alive” (I34). Recurring one-off financial rescue packages do not resolve the underlying financing problem. Since the onset of my study KiBiz is meant to be reformed further to resolve this problem. Several rescue packages were passed by the previous SPD-Green government. The recently elected CDU-FDP government has just recently made another

announcement that a new policy proposal will be submitted in January 2019; initial press releases however do not convey the impression that key issue of the Kindpauschale will be resolved (Voogt, 2018).

Barriers to public childcare expansion borne out of financing conflicts between stakeholders coexist with real resource scarcities, notably in the form of land and labour⁵⁴. Whereas conflicts take place in the formal political arena between organised interest groups, the givenness of real economic factors and the imperfect pricing of these factors create a dynamic that goes beyond intentional politics. Whereas recounting party and provider politics in the last decade in depth is beyond the scope and aim of this study, I will show in section 5.3.2.2 how local provider politics, on the example of the Catholic Church, impact slot expansion.

Below, I will first discuss parent contributions as the share of finance not yet mentioned (5.3.2.1), followed by the section about provider politics in regard to finance (5.3.2.2). Then I will move to the substantive economy of care, and the central issue of skills shortages (5.3.2.3). In this context I will also discuss KTP (5.3.2.4). The overall status quo, I will conclude, must be understood as a form of market failure, where austerity regulation on prices inhibits politically-intended growth.

5.3.2.1 Parent Contributions

The third pillar of childcare finance, beyond state subventions and provider shares discussed above, is parent contributions. These are set by the municipal government, and can vary substantially. In Cologne, the height of parent contributions depends on the age of the child (under 2 / 2-3 / above 3), and the income bracket of the parents (Figure 16). A family on unemployment benefits, and a yearly income below 12,271€, is therefore likely to receive free childcare, and pay 50€ for meals⁵⁵ in a public Kita. A family with an annual income above 100,000€

⁵⁴ consider Fraser's treatment of Polanyi (1.1)

⁵⁵ The price of one meal at 2.50€ serves as a limit to food quality that is widely contested by parents (I35).

respectively would pay 638.48€ for a child under two (491.14€ for 2-3 year old, 369.16€ for Ü3), plus meals.

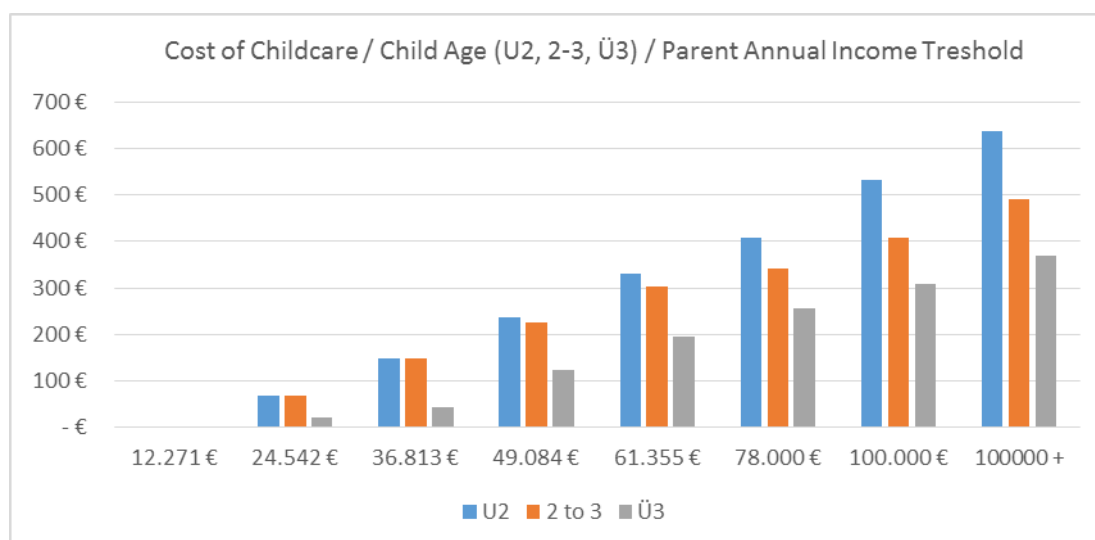


Figure 16 Public Childcare Cost in Cologne 2016 (Amt für Kinder Jugend und Familie Stadt Köln, 2016)

Whereas the progressive cost of childcare is alleviating social inequality, the current pricing nevertheless disadvantages lower- and middle-class families, because richer parents can afford private forms of childcare (for-profit Kitas, nannies, au-pairs, etc.) to avoid uncertainty and waiting in the public system (I2). To curb differentiation in the publicly-funded system and avoid exclusions of disadvantaged children, the Land NRW has published a recommendation for Kitas to make all additional services incurring extra costs for parents voluntary (LVR-Landesjugendamt, 2010). In accordance with these frames set by higher-level legislation, the city council in Cologne decided that providers may charge extra costs for meals only (Rat der Stadt Köln, 2012). According to a council worker in charge (I2), the prohibition on levying mandatory extra charges from parents has incurred financing problems for many non-statutory providers. They are limited to the same parent contributions as city-run Kitas. The levying of additional ‘charges’ can nevertheless take place more informally by asking parents to contribute to fundraisers, become a member of a provider organisation, or to volunteer. The ability of parents to contribute to such informal measures was present in rich districts (I17, I33). In conversation with parents, I asked whether they thought the Kita fees they paid were appropriate. Most parents were willing to pay, so long as

they were content with the service of the Kita. They generally found the fee appropriate to their earnings. On the other hand, as Markus (I25, 55:47-55:53) suggested, school and university education in Germany is free. In that comparison, the parent contributions to Kitas can be contested. Why pay for ECEC, in the rush-hour of life when money is particularly scarce for young families (1.3.2)?

Volunteering instead of fees is particularly common in parent-initiative Kitas:

Julian: “the board consists out of parents, there are different fields of responsibility which parents take charge of . those are really important things, like human resources, finance . and then we have , we introduced this some time ten years ago . that we allocate different parent volunteering positions. Uh, that includes positions like groceries for example, we have parents who clean the aquarium, we have parents responsible for IT . uh, which is arranged contractually – parents have I think 38h a year uh . mandatory time so to say, which they have to ‘serve’ [...] if for example somebody needs to paint the gymnasium, we ask the parents” (I33, 12:20-13:54)

The problem with regard to reconcilability is that, as discussed in section 4.4.2.2, parents need to have disposable time in order to fulfil these duties. Julian tends to avoid asking single parents for help. Parents on parental leave were the most likely to support the Kita. Whereas the expansion of public childcare has a defamilialising effect, in principle, financial and human resource restrictions make it necessary for parents to invest both money and time into Kitas. Whereas the former appears fairly unproblematic and legitimate, the latter relies on parents who have spare time. Voluntary work as a necessity for (some, especially parent-initiative) Kitas to function implies that families remain important agents in reproducing ‘public’ care. The promotion of parental (maternal) employment, especially full-time employment, entails risking that these kind of temporal resources become scarcer, and consequently the pressure on parents higher. Hence policies that favour an ‘unencumbered’ adult-worker-model need to direct more resources into public childcare, so that parental involvement becomes less necessary in the daily tasks of maintaining a Kita. This is not in conflict with policy targets voiced in the 2000s to support parent participation in public childcare (Deutscher Bundestag, 2008b), if

one separates the democratic involvement of parents in Kita coordination from the maintenance and organisational work they do. If labour supply in Kitas should rely less on parent volunteering, the obvious consequence is that more professional staff is required, not just in pedagogical activities, but also in administration, IT, facility maintenance, and similar areas. Some of these processes could be centralised on provider, municipal, or federal levels and provided as a service pool, so that even small providers or independent Kitas can efficiently draw on these shared resources. The current model of Kita catering is a good example, where the provision of meals has become cheaper due to outsourcing. Minimum quality standards, which are a huge issue with regard to catering (Gümüs, 135), would need to be complemented with funding levels sufficient to cover costs appropriately.

5.3.2.2 Expansion Targets and Church Politics

In NRW, struggle between municipal governments, federal government, and non-statutory welfare providers over the financing of childcare has involved several rounds of Kita closures by confessional providers. This slows down the expansion process and indicates that Church politics are at least partially opposed to the reform process. In part closures can be explained by dwindling numbers of Church-goers and Church tax revenues, a declining demand for religious education and the possibility to recruit and retain Church membership via early indoctrination.

The issue raised in the following has nothing to do with the legitimacy of religious institutions catering to their own target group; it is rather a question of equal access to services funded through public tax revenues. Furthermore, the following example tells an interesting story about expectations and strategy.

As noted above, 88% of a confessional Kita's expenses are met by the state. 27.1% of all Kitas in NRW are Catholic; in Cologne approximately 16% (Bock-Famulla, Lange and Strunz, 2015; Stadt Köln: Dezernat für Bildung, 2015). In an interview, the archdiocese's person in charge of childcare, Bosbach, said that 13 years ago it was not predictable that demand for childcare, especially U3, would surge as it did (Bosbach, 2017). Background to this statement is a project entitled "Zukunft heute", in which the Church reacted to declining numbers of Catholics with saving

measures. In the course of the project, the archdiocese assured parents that each Catholic child would have a childcare slot. This commitment, according to Bosbach, cannot be held up under current circumstances, that is, much higher demand for childcare than expected. Next to necessary investment to accommodate the different spatial needs of U3, a massive problem for any expansion is skills scarcity. “The market [for childcare practitioners] is basically empty” Bosbach said, and staff in Kitas were working at their limits. According to Frerk (personal correspondence) the Catholic Church’s mission to combine childcare with religious education usually demands staff to be Catholic, especially for managerial positions. This complicates the labour market supply shortage.

Looking back to the original formulation of “Zukunft heute” (Presseamt des Erzbistums Köln, 2004), the initial diagnosis of declining numbers of Catholics is explained through lower birth-rates. The effect is estimated to be a 25% loss of members in 25 years, accompanied by a 40% loss in revenues (ibid), which need to be rebalanced in a new household (Schwaderlapp, 2006). Resulting budget cuts affected childcare facilities. Albeit the Church suggests that only 3 out of 4 children in its care are Catholic, nevertheless the declining number of baptised children serves as the key reason to reduce service provision from ca. 2500 groups to 1600 groups (Presseamt des Erzbistums Köln, 2004), which was in 2006 corrected to 1691 groups. Of the 809 groups to be reduced, in 2006 304 were taken over by other providers, and 197 had received extra funding, which left 308 to be closed down by 2008 (Schwaderlapp, 2006).

How were these changes perceived on the local level? I interviewed a childcare manager both from a Catholic Kita that ‘survived’ the cuts, as well as from a Kita that was sold to another provider. Both managers reproduced the narrative of financial reasons in combination with fewer Catholic children.

Silke: “...and then came the Church reform, that groups would be handed away, and in fact the number of baptised were taken as the basis in the parishes, and afterwards it was then calculated how many groups in the parish were allowed to be Catholic.” (I19, 24:48-29:07)

Whereas statistical information on the city level is historically not available, shares of slots, sorted by providers, in Cologne, 2016 were: 43% city-run; 23% confessional, and 34% in various forms of non-profit organisation. Of the confessional ones, 16% were Catholic, 6% Protestant, and two facilities Jewish (less than 1%)⁵⁶. For comparison, NRW had a Catholic share of 25.7% and a Protestant share of 15.7% of facilities (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2015a). In conjunction with the ranking system to allocate slots described above (p. 217), it stands to reason that in Cologne, 23% of all childcare places are allocated with favour to Christian children.

The argumentation of balanced households has roused critique, given that the archdiocese of Cologne is the richest in Germany, possibly one of the richest worldwide. It is also a large actor in real estate and financial markets (Kohlenberg and Müller, 2014). Irrespective of these moral questions, the proclaimed need for balanced budgets as argument for retrenchment appears rather familiar in Welfare State studies and International Political Economy. This pattern of argumentation includes a tendency for the state to support financially ailing institutions, such as banks after the financial crisis. A similar pattern can be discerned for childcare: The provider share of funding for confessional Kitas in NRW has declined since 1990 from initially 36% to 20% (GTK §18a 1991), and 12% in 2008 (KiBiz §20). The state has increasingly taken over financial responsibility, after persistent lobbying. An interviewee described it as “blackmail”, in which the Churches threatened the Land government to close down even more Kitas if provider cost shares were not lowered further. The timing of Churches’ decision to withdraw gradually from childcare, such as in Cologne, certainly puts local and Länder governments under pressure to make concessions, so that expansion targets set by the federal government can be reached.

It must be considered that the financial basis – how much a Kita may cost – has been significantly altered with the introduction of KiBiz in 2008. The reform explains in large part the current financial shortages and limits to expansion, since many providers cannot raise the necessary funds to maintain or expand coverage (I34). It

⁵⁶ own calculations based on local statistics: Anlage 1: Gruppenstruktur in den Kindertagesstätten im Kindergartenjahr 2016/17

does not, however, explain the Catholic Church's decision to restructure, since this decision predates the KiBiz reform. These are more convincingly explained through the Church's priority to cater to Catholic children and disinvest its abundant resources from general public childcare. Provider lobbies' central concern is a reformulation of KiBiz towards a different accounting system, so that work done in Kitas can be compensated better to meet actual costs, especially regarding wages (I34). This demand is fair, if providers produce a *common good* – but I argue that the purposes that seem to inform the Church's strategy cannot be considered as such *if* they violate non-discrimination and largely restrict services to members. I therefore suggest that state funding for non-statutory childcare providers should entail transparency requirements over slot allocation criteria and reporting requirements over all families who applied, and all who were selected. These processes could be fully digitalised in a central application system. At the very least, transparency would foster a public debate over which criteria (e.g. hardship) can legitimately lead to positive discrimination, and which should not. Furthermore, transparency would help to make the matching between Kitas and parents more effective by raising more reliable expectations beyond stereotypical ideas that currently inform parents' selectivities.

5.3.2.3 *Skills Shortage and Industrial Relations*

Policy experts and managers perceive expansion limits most acutely in the inability to find qualified staff (Buhse, 2014). They attribute this to a lack of job attractiveness. Whereas in booming professions, such as IT, rising wages have resulted in higher numbers of students, wages in childcare professions remain low. Historically conceived of as 'women's work', needing to yield only an early career or secondary wage, childcare tariffs today remain at a relatively low level. With starting salaries of approximately 2110€ up to 2900€⁵⁷ for more experienced

⁵⁷ The WSI study (Stoll et al.) is based on 716 submission to the online portal lohnspiegel.de, supervised by the WSI, Hans Böckler Stiftung. Whereas not representative, results are considered as good orientation points (WSI, 2014). New queries on lohnspiegel.de suggest minor improvements between 2014 and 2018, but no groundbreaking shifts.

colleagues, the financial incentive to choose a childcare profession is negligible (Stoll *et al.*, 2014). Childcare managers (Kitaleitungen) earn only slightly more with 3075€ on average (ibid, p. 6). In response to the publication of the 2013 coverage statistics, Norbert Hocke, spokesperson of the GEW, suggested that longstanding neglect from politicians and employers to revalue childcare professions resulted in a lack of young professionals (GEW, 2013). Expansion targets could not be met by refusing to appreciate the responsibility of childcare work and remunerate it accordingly.

The number of employed childcare practitioners in Germany has increased by 67% in the last decade. In 2017, approximately 692 thousand individuals were employed in public childcare, of which approximately 2/7 worked full-time (38.5h+); the rest worked part-time, 2/7 less than 21h (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2017d). The majority of employees in childcare qualified as educators (ErzieherInnen). The numbers of people beginning the apprenticeship in childcare grew until 2014, but is since stagnating at approximately 35,000 per year nationwide, of which about a quarter to a third do not finish the program (Beher *et al.*, 2017). The last decade has furthermore seen the development of new university courses in ECEC, contributing to a growth of professional staff. Next to pedagogy, these courses also impart management knowledge and aim to qualify ECEC managers. About 20% of courses are run by Christian universities; the vast majority is public. It is important to note that (nominally) higher qualified graduates are employed on the same conditions and wages as their apprenticed colleagues.

Forecasts that consider demographic trends and continued needs to facilitate the U3 expansion predict skills shortages in ECEC until approximately 2024 (Beher *et al.*, 2017, p. 182). The prediction is based on training statistics, the assumptions that demand for U3 slots will not exceed 45% of children, and a fertility rate of 1.5%. This demand estimate depicts the status quo, but given the cultural shift of the last decade, there is a considerable likelihood that demand will rise further. The fertility rate, the authors mention, also has an upward risk, if very recent growth trends perpetuate themselves. Crucially, the model does not include improvements of the

staff-child ratio. It follows that even in a best case scenario, skills shortages can be expected to be a problem beyond the next decade.

The head of the public childcare division of the youth welfare agency in Cologne, Karsten Beetz (I1), said that forecasts about present and future demands for skilled workers routinely underestimated the number of required apprentices due to the wrong assumptions how many graduates remained within the occupation. The training capacities of occupational schools were insufficiently calculated. School fees for social professions have long been criticised as a disincentive to pursue a social career. Beetz further argued that to keep the profession attractive and employees happy, managers needed to facilitate a climate of “modern leadership”, which emphasised participation and recognition for hard work. Beetz also pointed out a need to consider alternative forms of occupation for older employees, who encountered their bodily limits in the daily work with small children. Statistics show that employee numbers above age 55 decline sharply (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2017d). In 2017 half of all practitioners retired early, and whereas this share is expected to decline, approximately 10% of staff are predicted to retire early for health reasons; another 25% for other reasons (Beher *et al.*, 2017, p. 178).

95% of all employees in childcare are female. This ratio is the highest in Germany even among care professions (Beher *et al.*, 2017, p. 145). In 2017 the share of male childcare practitioners increased to 5.2%, compared to 3.6% five years earlier (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2017a). The lack of male interest is often considered in terms of the low pay and a feminine professional image. While discussing his attitude to recent strikes and his own professional choices, Julian, student in early childhood pedagogy and educator in a parent initiative, said the following:

Julian: “given that I am a student and can work here I earn . ok. [...] uh, I am also of the opinion I would like to have a child, for example, and I find it hard to accept that I possibly earn too little. Because one hears this a lot, uh, . I grew up with little myself, and I was really fine, I am also fine now. Therefore uh . I find this thought [...] that is so common place now, that one says, precondition for a child is a . secure financial situation . well, I think this should not be a precondition for a child. Then one does not have to wonder why there are so few children in Germany. [...]

I don't believe that 90% of all men decide against this, just because they . get too little money for this . [Nina: but instead?] . that is the question . well I believe, what could be, is this . my father for example is somebody, who is very masculine (männlich) . he for example would never accept if somebody is homosexual. If I said to him I'm gay, he would not like that at all. He has this particular image of a man . uh . and I believe if you let children grow up with such a message, then you don't have to be surprised if they felt feminine in such a role [...] that has something to do with education [...] I don't believe that this is just about money.”(I33, 1:01:18-1:04:39 + 1:17:33-1:19:17)

Alexa: “few men enter the profession [...] who can feed a family from that wage? No normal person would- well, that does not work. You can't become an educator, if you plan to found your own family. In general – educators love children. They probably want to have their own as well – therefore, uh, the conditions simply don't fit to what . that one decides to become an educator.” (I18, 39:06-42:08)

Gender clearly matters for professional choices. Yet at the same time, the fact persists that with approximately 2,100€ a month one will find it hard to raise a family, particularly in the cities. Wages for childcare practitioners vary with work experience, size of enterprise, location, sex, temporal employment, and collective bargaining coverage. A recent survey (Stoll *et al.*, 2014) suggest that West Germans received 8% higher wages on average than East Germans; female workers, making up 79% of all respondents to the survey, received 7% less on average. Temporary employees received approximately 13% less than their permanently employed colleagues (ibid, p.12). 75% of all employees were paid on the basis of collective labour agreements (TVöD, TV-L), with an average wage 9% above their colleagues. Whether or not a childcare practitioner is paid according to civil service labour agreements depends on the provider type of the childcare facility, which can be the state, large welfare organisations, or small independent providers. State employees are paid based on the collective labour agreements for civil servants, TVöD for employees of Bund and municipalities, and TV-L for employees of the Länder. Non-statutory providers are free to choose if they want to adhere to the TVöD. Large welfare providers, such as the Churches, AWO, and German Red Cross, have their own tariff agreements. Smaller providers may opt out.

One effect of this fragmentation of providers and labour agreements is that different provider types have different collective bargaining rounds and industrial action schedules. The fact that strikes are organised by provider/tariff affiliation means that only ever a part of all facilities close down at any given moment, and that 43,4% of Kitas cannot strike legally under Church law. This undermines the ability of industry-wide collective action. In spring 2015, public employees went on strike after bargaining rounds had come to a deadlock on April 21st (Zeit Online, 2015). Between May 8th and June 8th all public Kitas closed down, causing the most prominent strike of childcare workers since 2009.

Thomas	Well tha was . mixed also, those who I encounterd [at the parent meeting], between those who were sympathetic about the strike and the motives, and the others . because just on that evening, or just before came the announcement, there is now a tariff agreement – hence the mood was already more . relaxed, but I know of many who hab been extremely annoyed, and they also really had problems . 3 – 4 weeks without childcare [Imke: horrible!] . and one had to take leave .
Imke	That affects livelihoods . [Thomas: yes, exactly] but on the other hand the wages are far too low. That is also no-go, well . that cannot remain this way either.

(I24, 1:40:20-1:42:36)

There is a wide consensus that ECEC is underpaid, and a certain amount of solidarity exists between parents and practitioners during strike times. The domino effect of striking childcare workers on parents' ability to work has brought this matter into wide public awareness. Some participants considered strike results as frustrating because they see a unique opportunity in the childcare expansion policy that gives workers more power due to the current skills-shortage. At the same time, many practitioners voiced moral concerns over strikes: some were not allowed to strike as Church employees, but refused to provide emergency slots for children from Kitas on strike; others provided them arguing for a need to 'put the children first' (I19). Some complained that the opportunity was not used enough and others felt that strikes should be reduced because the children suffered from it (I15, 47:38-51:34) and parents ran into employment-related problems. Some said that pedagogic staff was by nature 'harmony-seeking' people and that therefore their willingness to strike did not ever reach the full impact and potential that they could have if they were more prepared to fight (I18, 39:06-42:08). These aspects highlight the specific

ethical character of ECEC work that is conveyed in practitioner discourses, including the awareness of families' dependence on practitioners. The latter acts as a moral barrier to engage more fully in industrial action.

5.3.2.4 *Kindertagespflege*

The second mode of public childcare provision, as introduced above, is Kindertagespflege (KTP). In its introductory period in Germany, 1974–79, KTP was supported by the family ministry in a pilot project. The project was heavily monitored by developmental psychologists and paediatricians, because famous members of these groups opposed KTP fundamentally. This was due to the – in West Germany absolutely hegemonic – idea that children below age three should be cared for by the mother; otherwise their health and development was at risk. Findings in that period, however, suggested that children cared for in KTP developed better than children in their homes (Schumann, 2013). In fact, the dissatisfaction of 'unwilling' housewives expressed in the 1970s over the lack of appropriate public childcare appeared to have a detrimental effect on mother-child relations. Consequently, the women's movement at the time was a strong proponent for KTP (ibid).

Developmental psychologists today, according to Losch-Engler (150)⁵⁸, while still tending to favour a conservative model of family care, recommended KTP over Kita as a protected space for small children to learn to interact with others (Schumann, 2013). Prompted to describe the difference between KTP and Kita, Losch-Engler suggested that whereas Kitas often were heavily structured, overcrowded, and served catering food, KTP – “when done right” – retained a warm and welcoming familiar atmosphere, home cooking, and a closer bond between carer and child (150). Municipalities today are tasked to provide both KTP and Kita, due to a “Wunsch- und Wahlrecht” (right to choose) for parents (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012a, §5 with §23-24). In practice, this choice is often limited by slot scarcities that compel parents to accept the offer they receive.

⁵⁸ Head of the Landesverband Kindertagespflege NRW

From an economic perspective, KTP has been promoted as a cheaper alternative to Kitas, and a solution to reduce factor scarcities, since care is offered in carers' homes and KTP carers can be trained faster than educators. Before the passing of TAG in 2005, KTP received no public subsidies, apart from a lump sum for operating costs of 245€ per week, which could be deducted from gross earnings of carers, so that generally they remained below a taxable income⁵⁹. This system was accompanied by expectations that "women did this on the side" (Losch-Engler, I50). After 2005, not only did KTP receive public subsidies – it also became taxable, and carers had to pay social insurance contributions, unless their income remained below 450€. In that case they could remain in the family health insurance. In the last decades KTP has moved from a side job of mothers towards becoming a long-term occupation. As a consequence, carers demand working conditions that enable a financially independent existence. Currently this is not given. As freelancers, carers are not eligible to receive minimum wages (currently 8.50€/h). Average hourly compensation in NRW has increased to 4.69€ per child, per hour, plus a tax-free lump-sum for material expenses of 300€ (MFKJKS, 2016, p. 44). Furthermore, municipalities have to reimburse 100% accident insurance, and 50% of pension, care, and health insurance contributions (ibid). The wage is set by the municipality, and substantial differences exist. Since 2013, NRW has banned carers from charging additional fees to ensure equal access for all parents.

KTP is limited to a maximum of five children per carer⁶⁰. Recommendations for U3 by pedagogues and the EU posit an ideal staff-child ratio of 1:3. Whereas the KTP associations (Bundesverband & Landesverbände Kindertagespflege) in principle support low ratios as a family-like environment, this limit poses problems for the financial situation of carers. Five children cared for in full-time translates financially into a status which is recognised by social insurances and the tax office as an avocational/part-time (*nebenberufliche*) occupation (I50). In consequence, carers

⁵⁹ At wages of about 2,50 € per hour, per child. Overall income thus depended on the number of children cared for, which in most cases remained below the taxable threshold. KTP was exempted from social insurance. (I50)

⁶⁰ Excluding any number of own children. The number each individual carer has permission to take is locally settled by a Fachberater (supervisor) and depends on the competences and living circumstances of the carer.

do not pay full contributions to social insurance – and in return receive less benefits. Sick-pay for instance is excluded. Pensions accrued are insufficient to ward off old-age poverty. This lowers the cost of KTP to the detriment of not transforming it into the vocation it needs to be to ensure carer's economic wellbeing. The roots of the male-breadwinner-model, which initially provided the context in which KTP emerged, are becoming a poverty risk for carers under a stronger adult-worker logic.

Not recognised as a formal profession, KTP requires 'only' a qualification. This can be attained in courses comprising 160h of material, ranging from pedagogy to business plans. Whereas training for KTP was initially locally organised, the DJI developed a curriculum from the 1990s onward, which has become the major training module accepted today (I50). While this development must be seen as a professionalisation for KTP, respective to the educator apprenticeship or new ECEC university degrees, a growth of KTP entails a deskilling and decline of employment conditions in public childcare in total. KTP associations organise against these tendencies to professionalise KTP education through more extensive qualification, better social insurance for carers, and public subventions for both (I50). But in the eye of the public, in particular parents, KTP is not associated with the education and development of children, but only with supervision in a 'warm' family environment. In consequence, KTP cannot be seen as *equal* to Kitas – neither for carers, nor for the state, nor for parents – or children, indeed, irrespective of a formally equal status.

This conflict materialises in cities such as Cologne, when under slot scarcity parents are confronted with an offer for KTP, which may not be entirely suited to their needs (passgenaue Vermittlung). If they decline the offer, the municipality has still fulfilled its obligations under the right to public childcare. A second offer need not be made. Alternately, a child might be taken out of a KTP arrangement after only a short time, because a Kita slot becomes available. This might occur against the convictions of developmental psychologists and the KTP carer that care relations should be long-term (I50). KTP then becomes the 'little sister' or buffer for parents who prefer a Kita, but cannot receive a slot there immediately.

5.3.2.5 *Market Failure: A Summary*

Constraints on Kita funding and wages are given through the lump-sum financing of Kitas implemented with KiBiz in 2008. A similar system of publicly determined prices exists for KTP. Childcare is not a 'free market', but provided under strict price controls. Wage growth rates anticipated in public budgeting, however, remained below actual wage increases educators have pressed for in industrial action over the last years. This has led to chronic underfinance. A lack of attractiveness of the occupation, rooted in its history as 'women's work', makes childcare wages problematic with the decline of the male-breadwinner-model. The inconsistencies that emerge between different gender models and the temporal patterns of ECEC professions are not sufficiently being addressed by policy-makers. The slot scarcities that emerge in West-German cities are perpetuated by financial and skill shortages. At the same time, confessional providers have been withdrawing funds from childcare, and parents have been partially banned from making extra payments. This overall dynamic undermines public and private impulses for sufficient supply growth. In consequence, the current regulation must be seen to induce market failure, and is in need of fundamental overhaul.

An interesting observation about these concerns is that the main economic dimensions in conflict are human time and skills, the availability and shaping of spaces⁶¹, and finance – in other words, Polanyi's fictitious commodities: labour, land, and money, which Fraser drew upon in her feminist critique of political economy. Without intending to apply this framework of analysis in any rigorous manner, the pattern is nevertheless worth commenting on. Having established a set of 'preconditions' in the German ECEC political economy as stated above (5.3.1, last paragraph), I will now return to the theme of time problems in line with the first research question (see introduction).

⁶¹ This point has not been addressed in detail, but urban land is scarce. Prices of land and rents have been increasing steadily. Carsten Beetz, head of the responsible agency, has pointed out that inabilities to find suitable construction sites in urban areas hinders Kita expansion (I1). Federal funds for new buildings cannot be used, because the necessary spaces are currently simply not on the market.

5.3.3 Timings, Ideologies, and Synchronisation

I already discussed above that parents are likely to apply to all and any Kita in their area of residence they deem acceptable (5.3.1). Ideas informing *when* parents apply for Kita slots come from different angles. I mentioned the ‘first-come, first-serve’ logic of city-run Kita applications. In this chapter I will expand the theme of temporal selectivities: First, I will discuss diverging views on age-appropriate care. The timing for the transition between parental and public care is affected by beliefs held about the appropriate age of children to leave the home and be cared for in a larger group (5.3.3.1). Secondly, parental leave restricts the window of time in which parental childcare can be delivered without major economic backlashes. Here I will delve deeper into the uncertainties of transitions between familial and institutional care (5.3.3.2). Thirdly, the regulation of public childcare provision itself generates specific temporal opportunity structures, which I will discuss in section 5.3.3.3.

5.3.3.1 *Neo-Familialism in a Third Way World*

A central ideological division exists between parents who hold more traditional beliefs that children should be cared for in a family environment until the age of three, and parents who think a separation around the age of one is acceptable. This division has been traced in the context of OECD policy recommendations by Mahon (2004), who distinguishes between neo-familialist and third-way ideologies as alternative responses to the “farewell to maternalism”, the latter implying a retreat of the state to support full-time motherhood (Orloff, 2006). By *neo-familialist* Mahon (2004) describes a policy regime which emphasises “women’s right to choose between a temporary housewife–mother role and labour force participation, with the balance tipped in favour of the former”. Maternal care is posited as best for U3 children, which correlates with a policy emphasis on long (2–4 years) parental leave and little support for other forms of childcare.

“Women are encouraged to return to work, but rarely to their former job, and usually on a part-time basis, when the child enters public pre-school. This model does little for gender equality and, its typically low rate of reimbursement means that it

operates primarily as an incentive for working-class, not professional, women to withdraw from the labour market.” (Mahon, 2004, p. 176)

The *third-way* (e.g. Giddens, 1998), conversely, emphasises gender sameness and a general adult-worker-model, ignoring the gender differences that arise from different roles outside the labour market. Policy promotes short leaves and non-parental care to minimise human capital losses (in the interest of employer and worker).

“Consistent with the ‘new public management’ theory on which third way, like neo-liberal, thinking draws [...], the state is not to play the role of provider. Rather, in the name of efficiency and equity, the public role should be limited to supporting the choices of consumer-citizens through demand-side subsidies, improving the flow of information, and/or regulation. States work thus work in ‘partnership’ with the private (commercial and non-profit) sector, usually at the local level.” (Mahon, 2004, pp. 176–7)

Whereas third-way proponents, unlike neo-liberals, see a role for the state to engage in social investment, notably education, the solution of market-based services permits the formation of a secondary labour market. Women’s disproportional representation in the latter points to an acceptance of a one-and-half-breadwinner-model (ibid).

In Germany, childcare managers reported that in the last ten years beliefs have partially shifted from a neo-familialist towards a third-way understanding among professional parents.

Alexa: “the age limit downwards is always being . expanded further. We really take in children from 4 months, yes, and those are getting ever more. One simply notices that the . in the beginning it was still the case that parents, very often mothers, and couples came in here, and registered their children, and wanted to bring those here with one year. Always with the feeling of having a bad conscience, because the grandparents, so their parents, always said: how can you hand over your child so early? This is getting less and less, because it . has already become normal, I’ll say, that children go to the Kindergarten so early.” (I18, 11:31-13:36)

In the last decade, the number of U3 children in public childcare has increased by ca. 150%, from 253,894 children in 2006 to 645,077 children in 2017 (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2017d). In comparison the number of Ü3 children has remained relatively stable (2,333,839 to 2,354,261). Another incline is noticeable in the number of school children who are taken care of in Kitas, which can be explained by the expansion of after-school supervision for that age group.

Simultaneously there is a trend towards an expansion of hours in day-care. Notable is also a decline in ‘part-time’ childcare hours, or morning and afternoon care with lunchbreaks for children at home; respectively a tendency towards ‘full-time’ care is clearly visible (Figure 17)⁶².

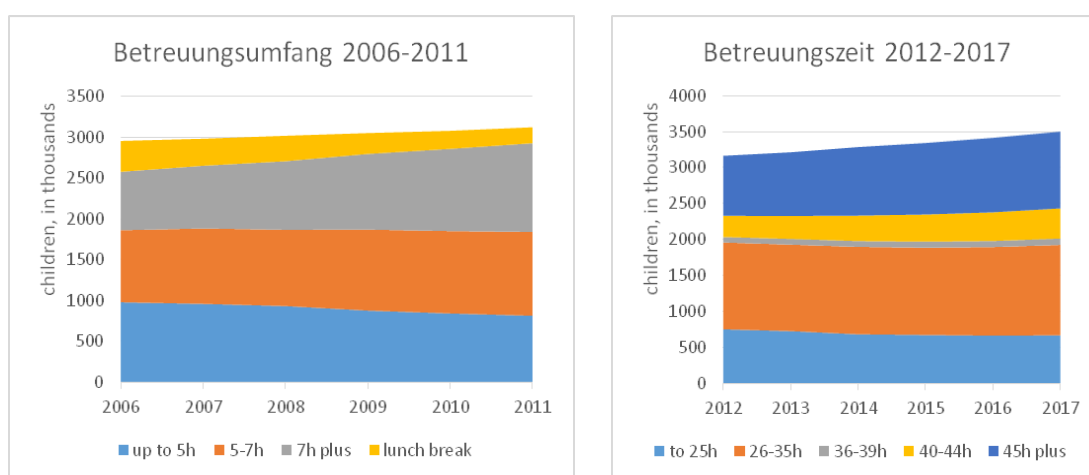


Figure 17 Public Childcare Daily/Weekly Durations

What my data contributes to this rather clear statistical picture is the insight that this quantitative trend goes hand in hand with a cultural shift. Unlike the linearity that the statistics may suggest, however, the daily mediation of the cultural turn is much more complex and contested. Whereas the third-way model of childcare gradually appears to become the “new normal”, it is particularly women who second-guess the changes to their roles implied in this shift. Or, perhaps better put, the institutional shift is causing frictions in how women see their own identities. Men appear less affected, even though their roles are changing too – or aren’t

⁶² Both diagrams show the average time of children in public care, and amount of children in each bracket. The statistical categories changed in 2012 in line with regulatory changes. Whereas *Betreuungsumfang* was calculated in h/per day, *Betreuungszeiten* are weekly. They align with booking time brackets, which are defined on a weekly basis in new policies such as KiBiz.

they? Above I have argued that adjustments to fathers' lives progress in relatively smaller steps, and that the main burden of the 'second shift' remains predominantly with mothers. The following quotes from Kita managers shed some light on contemporary sentiments:

Julian: "well generally the . the concept of family is changing, the role of fathers is changing . [...] I have many fathers who are on parental leave, which is really unusual for me . until today" (I33, 39:15-40:39)

Alexa: "overwhelmingly mothers, I also say. I say this is a main problem of women, of mothers. [...] I notice this very often in conversations, uh, well really that, mothers also talk about this . I have seen many mothers, who got ill, truly ill, had burnout, because they simply always had this . very often mothers in social professions, who are teachers, or educators, well ill, coming from social professions, but also others, uh, who always have this conflict, well, to care for others, but their own children, and their own partners, always remain-one always has the feeling they fall by the wayside . and if one wants to allocate it healthily, one has the feeling the job falls – well, you don't do 100% anymore. I know it, because I know it from personal experience, you are always in a conflict, yes, definitely" (I18, 10:15-11:14)

The mentioning of women in social professions is particularly interesting as a local example of a mistress-maid dynamic (Young, 2001), where the care work one women can outsource becomes another woman's work. The professionalisation of childcare and education, which is brought forward by the shift to third-way policies, promotes a greater outsourcing of carework. Examples as the one above compel the question in how far the working conditions of professional carers need improvement (as already suggested in 5.3.2.3).

A key issue I want to highlight here is that the third-way model might very well be becoming the norm of how childcare is done – but not for everyone, and even for its professional target group not without struggle. For parents, and in particular mothers, the transition from familial to institutional care is wrought with uncertainties: on moral, economic, and organisational grounds. The moral struggle often takes the shape of bad consciences for 'Rabenmütter' (see p.168), which

underlines the neo-familialist moral framework that coexists next to the third-way logic incrementally introduced by labour market and family policies.

The following narrative by Ralf and Christina serves as a very telling example of how the third-way logic is contested by parents with more conservative leanings. After several remarks about not being 'mainstream', I asked the couple whether they perceived themselves as pressured to correspond to some kind of mainstream:

Ralf: "it is simply objectively set through the societal framework . [for example in the functionality of parental benefits] that is calculated based on the last . net income of the last 12 months . and when you have a child, and then stay home for 2 years, then have your second child, then you get 300€ parental benefit. And well when you go to work after one year, and then have a second child, you get pff . up to 1800€ parental benefit. There are now already some very clear political frameworks which well . force a certain direction. [...] last year the kindergarten where [our older son] is . called and said to us, Mrs X, Mr X, if you put your child with one year into the kindergarten, then you get a slot from me in my kindergarten. With two years this gets very difficult . and with three years you will definitely not get a childcare slot anymore. I can't help it, these are the frameworks in which I move . and uh . another Kita manager (Leitung) told us for example very clearly: if I accept a child above three years into my kindergarten, I need to pay back 340,000€ subsidies. I don't have that money." (I28, 33:37-35:06)

Christina: "yes, those are the objective ones . and the subjective coercions (Zwänge) or so . yes, well when I was in this Geburtshaus with [my son] . with him in his first year, I was the only one with one other I believe who also . wanted to care for her child longer than one year . uh . one does feel a little bit like an outsider . yes uh, odd, that nobody here has the wish to somehow . well . it was . one then has to show a certain strength: well I do it differently, and I don't know, if I had been 10 years younger, I may not have had it, this strength" (I28, 35:58-36:51)

Christina goes on to describe the encouraging encounters she had with various authority figures on childcare, such as educators, managers, and paediatricians. She encountered these people as a mother, but also when qualifying as a KTP carer. Being inspired by Emmi Pickler's pedagogy, she emphasised that attachment needs to come before education:

Christina: “I see it as a KTP carer (Tagesmutter), I get that live: screaming child, uh, I can’t teach it anything or support it, right, it first needs the calm (Ruhe), the feeling of security (Geborgenheit), then . it opens up and can receive stimulation (Anregung)” (I28, 40:30-41:37)

She furthermore contested the common sense, often mentioned by supporters of the third-way, that mothers in France had a better life with early institutional childcare.

Christina: “this Zeit article, which opened my eyes so much ... well France, everything running well there . if one looks behind the stage, right, what the psychiatrists there . how many burnout mothers there are, who quickly nurse their child in the morning, pump milk, and then somehow the child into the Kita and uh . I can’t recount it all now, but there stood uh . also, that the children are not really faring well. I don’t know who did the study – unicef or so? [...] that was another insight (Aha-Erlebnis) [...] well one is supposedly not supposed to spread that article, also because this is not the mainstream...” (I28, 41:42-43:02)

The examples above illustrate everyday uptakes of family discourses, situated in certain streams of pedagogy and the news coverage on family. A review of pedagogic perspectives is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Neither can the news coverage in Germany of the last 10 years be analysed systematically. But a brief glance nevertheless reveals that a struggle between neo-familialist and third-way perspectives on family life is fought in public media. Therein the international comparison of childcare system to Scandinavia and especially France is very common. Whereas the French model is being repeatedly hyped as a role model for German developments towards a third-way, there is an ongoing contestation that emphasises the problem of the French model from a neo-familialist perspective (Rahir, 2006; Schubert, 2008). Summarising the argument, pro-French commentators emphasise the benefits of state-run childcare in France and the 35h

week, and posit the strong role of the family in Germany as a “Mutterkult” that drains women of their time for themselves, forcing them to sacrifice their own interests for the sake of their children, husbands, and employers (e.g. Groll and Joeres, 2015). Given my own findings with regards to mothers’ experience of time, that critique of the German model seems warranted. Neo-familialists, in return, seek to criticise the French model. Schubert (2008), for instance, begins his article with the following



Figure 18 Spiegel Cover 2008

statement: “Differently as broadly assumed has France not found the perfect response to the reconcilability of profession and family” (author’s translation). French women were still carrying out the bulk of care and housework, while their husbands furthered their own careers. The author cites Mercedes Erra, General Director of a large corporation: “the women [...] always feel guilty, because they think they don’t care enough for their children and household. This results in a lack of self-confidence” (ibid, author’s translation). The public debate that developed around the 2000s family reforms was aptly captured in the Spiegel cover story “Glaubenskrieg ums Kind” (religious war over the child, Figure 18), which brings the issue to the point:

Der Spiegel: “Consensus however lies in a far distance, when it comes to how far Mom is allowed to distance herself from the cradle. And even more so: *how long*. Does she have to mollycoddle her little one 24/7? Is it enough, when she devotes the after-work hours to him?” (Brandt, von Bredow and Theile, 2008, emphasis added)

These cumulative examples demonstrate first and foremost one thing: that there is – to this very day – no public consensus about the legitimacy and desirability of the policy transition from a neo-familialist to a third-way model of childcare for professionals in Germany. The ongoing struggle of the last decade has not stabilised in a new third-way equilibrium. Mindful of Gramsci’s understanding of hegemony

(2.3.1) as the “continuous formation and overcoming of unstable equilibriums” (PN 7: 1584, cited in Brand and Sekler, 2009, p. 55), it might not be useful to offer a general answer of yes or no to the question of whether or not there has been a hegemonic shift in German family policy. Such a before-after model would take us straight back to the punctuated-equilibrium thinking I have criticised in Hall (1993) and Blyth (2002). What I want to highlight once more, however, is that third-way policies have been understood as dominant (coercive), and that those following them in practice frequently experienced feelings of guilt (compare 4.5). The media represents reconcilability as struggle. I believe it is helpful to speak of an attempt by governing forces to create a third-way hegemony – but an attempt that is challenged not only by doubts about moral legitimacy, but furthermore by the governments inability to grow infrastructure fast enough to deliver substantively on its own ideological promises. This second aspect I discussed above (5.3.2) as a form of market failure generated by regulation issues and resource shortages.

The timing of children’s’ transition from parental to state care is at the core of public debate and policy reform in the last decade, and can adequately be considered the most represented. But crucially it is not the only *temporal issue* that creates conflict in the restructuring of daily childcare relations.

5.3.3.2 *Transitions from Family to Institutional Care*

While many parents are aware of the urgency with which the city Kita application should be done (right after birth), another timing issue is less transparent, even though it is crucial in determining access to public childcare. Kitas follow the Kitajahr (Kita-year), which is linked to the school year that starts in August. The Kita-year is the temporal grid for a range of managerial considerations, including reporting deadlines and operational planning. It is simultaneously the accounting year for which the Kita plans a budget. Since the KiBiz reform in 2008, the budget of the Kita depends very elastically on the number of children enrolled. It is therefore a central concern of every manager to sustain an even in- and outflow of children. Because the outflow is temporally fixed by the start of the school year for the oldest children, the intake of children must also be pegged to that same date. In

consequence, Kita slots become available in bulk in August, and only intermittently during the year, for example if families move. *This practice of making slots available only once a year, which is entirely rational given the funding regulations of KiBiz, is incompatible with the right to public childcare at the child's age of one.*

This is particularly noticeable for children born in winter and early spring. The break-off date of birth to be considered part of a year-group is November 1st of each year. The year-group composition matters, because different Kita group forms have a different staff ratio⁶³. Younger children are cared for by more staff than older children. For parents of the so-called 'winter children' (Rinkl, 2015b) this temporal classification into year-groups causes problems, because their children are in tendency considered for the following year. This tendency is compounded by the fact that Kitas have to report their intake of children for the next August by March, and consequently finalise their intake selection no later than early spring – but often much earlier.

Johanna: "our admission meeting is always in October . the previous year of the planned admission. We take in to August 1st, rarely below one year, because all slots are gone, well full, anyhow" (I17, 1:34-11:24)

Some parents whose children are born in winter or spring, and who want a slot as early as possible, cannot apply in time. In most cases their parental benefit and leave stops after 12 months, which is again in winter/spring. Parents then have to bridge another 4-6 months until public childcare is available in August. Even those whose children are born before November 1st may struggle to receive a slot, because the city is more concerned with giving places to children above the age of one whose parents have already been waiting another year. The childcare in that provision gap is entirely familialised. As described above, grandparents are the most likely source of support for mothers in this phase of life (4.4.2.1). If given no other

⁶³ The KiBiz has implemented three group forms: Form I is for 20 children age 2-6, with 4-6 children age 2. Form II is for 10 children below three (U3). Form III is for 25 children above age 3 (Ü3). The hours of skilled labour funded vary depending on how many hours (25, 35, 45h) are booked per child. (Landtag NRW, 2007, Anlage §19)

choice, these mothers remain at home without benefit, often to their own and their employer's frustration.

Given the scarcity of slots in West-German urban areas, parents whose children cannot be placed receive a written rejection from the municipal youth welfare authority, but this can take several months. With that document, parents can claim compensation for private childcare expenses from the municipality. Compensation does not cover parents' lost income, as the right to childcare connotes the child's right of early education, not the parents' right to public services (BGH, 2016). Lost income is sometimes compensated after trial, but this is still a contested legal field. The trials and their broad media representation (for instance Spiegel Online, 2016) have supported a wider awareness amongst parents that it is possible to sue municipalities (I2), which has become more frequent in practice.

Parents, trying to resolve the temporal incompatibility of the right to childcare and Kita-year thus resort to the court system as an opportunity to effect change. But even if they receive economic compensation, the *inability to reliably plan* the transition from parental to institutional care causes problems for parents and employers alike. The uncertainties parents face towards the availability of a Kita slot are passed on to the employer, who cannot know when an employee will return to work. This is a problem that the state could and should resolve to a higher degree than is currently the case.

A more thought-through policy would consider the synchronisation of parental leave with public childcare entry times: The latest reforms did take parental leave durations into consideration by aligning the end of standard leave (12 months) with the timing of the right to public childcare (=1st birthday). But the legislator apparently underestimated the temporal constraints of the Kita-year in conjunction with the slot scarcity that became more noticeable in the course of the last decade. Put differently, efforts to synchronise policy temporalities did not consider the asynchronicity between individual birthdays and collective Kita schedules. Given the natural inevitability of the former, a 'temporal buffer' that translates children's life time into Kita/school years is inevitable. Currently this buffer is familialised.

To close this gap in public provision, the right to childcare could be amended to the Kita-year following a minimal age of the child (1 year or 9 months), and parental benefits would need to be extended until the time that a childcare slot is actually available. The downside of such a policy is that parents would receive divergent amounts of parental leave, dependent on the birthday of their child, even if slot supply matched demand. This could be understood as unfair. Families who do not seek to give their children away early could also misuse the extension as a longer leave option. Provisions would need to be made to make the extended leave contingent on a timely Kita application. The 'buffer' would then be financed on the national level, as the Bund is responsible for parental benefits.

As a second option, the Kita-year could be substituted by a more flexible system. Financial regulation of Kitas would need to be less dependent on the number of children in care. This alternative would, *ceteris paribus*, be less economically efficient and more volatile in terms of quality, because the number of children would fluctuate more relative to the number of staff. Given the overall scarcity of skilled staff, and the consequent power of workers on the labour market, a general flexibilisation of employment contracts seems unfeasible. Attachment theory further suggests that short-term relations between children and staff (=fluctuation) would be psychologically detrimental to child wellbeing. The particular nature of care work thus discourages temporary work contracts. Hence the cost of flexible provision would fall on the provider, not the worker. Here the 'buffer' would be financed by the federal states or municipalities, who are responsible for service provision.

The political decision between those alternatives needs to weigh the costs and benefits of selectively longer familial care against more flexible institutional care. The first proposed solution benefits family-oriented parents and seems relatively easy to implement. It 'only' requires a refinance of extra parental benefits by the Bund, no added infrastructure expansion. In contrast, the second option serves work-oriented parents and employers by giving them more power over the 'when' of children's transitions into institutional care. This option is 'fairer' by maintaining universal parental benefit durations. It offers public services suited to more

individual temporal demands by parents. In consequence, however, these flexibilities would necessitate larger public budgets for Kitas on the Länder/municipal level.

Whereas both solutions defamilialised the 'buffer' between birthdays and Kita-year, the second option might be more desirable in the long term due to fairness and added temporal autonomy for parents and employers. In the short term, however, the additional substantive resources needed (e.g. skilled staff) are not available. The first option could therefore help as an interim solution for parents to close the gap in provision identified above.

A third alternative, which I have not discussed at length, would be the expansion of KTP for U3, as this form of care is already more flexible than Kita. But this option also has downsides, as already discussed in 5.3.2.4. KTP is less economically efficient, but with additional professionalisation in terms of quality and wages, this mode of provision might have a very good potential to flexibly close the provision gap, offer a 'close to family' environment for U3 children, and thus serve as a win-win compromise between third-way and neo-familialist interest groups.

5.3.3.3 Opening Hours and Reconcilability

Another problem in the temporal coverage of public childcare is found on daily and weekly scales: One of the major contestations of parents towards the current system are the limited opening hours, usually between 7:30 and 16:30. Statistics discussed above also showed that a large portion of public childcare is still part-time, usually in the mornings. This excludes parents with non-standard work schedules. The flexibility high-praised and demanded in the labour market has not reached the Kita system.

Remember (Figure 11, p.189): Elena and Markus had a combined working week between both parents of more than 90 hours, yet could reconcile their schedules because her (formally part-time) work of 40 h/week just fit into the opening hours of the Kita. This simple example shows why attention to institutional schedules in detail, and their synchronisation, is crucial to understanding reconcilability issues. More work in social sciences could be done to discern the consequences of

irreconcilability between structural (institutional) rhythms, and how some people occupying roles with synchronised schedules have advantages over people who 'fall between the rhythms'.

Another dimension of the reconciliation problem is adult education, because evening schools and apprenticeships are not synchronised with public childcare. Universities have only made small inroads in that regard. Nightshifts and dangerous work pose a particular problematic already before the arrival of a child, because pregnant women are banned from both during maternity leave (see p. 145). After the birth, returning into their previous occupations is often problematic, either because overnight childcare is unavailable, or because health hazards could still affect the child. These issues affect for instance workers in medical laboratories, logistics, or security. The position of parents within (or outside) the labour market clearly emerges as a central determinant for their ability to reconcile care work. It is not just the hours and wage level, but centrally the specific schedules and commuting times between work, childcare facility, and home, which matter. In other words, the synchronisation of employment and parenting schedules is essential to enable people to partake in both spheres. In times in which atypical employment is expanding, childcare is caught in a moral dilemma between accommodating parent's needs for expanded opening hours, and children's needs – as articulated in pedagogy – of a regular day structure and time together.

The desirability of expanded opening hours is deeply contested. Whereas single mothers in my sample were desperate for expanded hours to be able to enter education or employment to have a financially independent future, upper middle-class parents were deeply averse to the idea of "24-hour Kitas". As Thomas said, any flexibility for childcare given to parents by Kitas would likely just be taken from parents again by expanding employer demands, "like a kind of race" of increasing flexibilisation (I24: 44:49-47:28). For Elena as a working mother, opening times at her Kita between 8:00-16:30 were experienced as "very stiff". When she had to work longer, Markus or her mum jumped in. On the other hand she said she could understand the educators' low tolerance for overtime in an already badly paid profession (I25, 49:29-51:23).

Thomas: “I have seen this now, the USA, that there is such an overnight supervision . there I have to say, then . then it is not a family format anymore . then it is something else, then one must decide . but maybe the people there are simply forced professionally, that they don’t have a chance of doing something else” (I25, 44:49-47:28)

Comments like that clearly illustrate professional parents’ perception of a changing working world, and resistance to the demands this world makes on families. As such, they described limitations to childcare hours as good, because they effectively imposed limits to employer demands.

Looking back to the institutional constraints discussed above with regard to age-groups and Kita group types, another interesting phenomenon became visible among more family-oriented parents: They did not take up the hours booked in the Kita, even though they paid for them. Ralf and Christina’s son spent approximately 20h per week in public care, even though the couple had booked 45h. With regard to their second daughter, they had been discouraged from seeking a slot for a child older than two. At one point, the couple had considered to pay for a slot without actually using it.

Christina	Yeah yeah, one can always pick him up. One can even not bring him at all hehe, well one only has to pay. hehe
Ralf [Christina]	We went through the idea once, the Kita manager was also willing to do that. [of course, she has less work then] . to pay in full, and then send nobody [and send nobody hehe] hehe for a whole year [exactly]
Christina	Yeah yeah, that was crass. Just to get a childcare slot . for [our daughter] after all we had . received none in the Kita where [our son] is . and there was well, they told us that . now, last sumer, I could have taken one, or something . otherwise you get none. And then we considered, whether we should pay for a year without sending her but uh . she would have gone along with that, the manager I mean

(I28b, 18:03-18:47)

Responses such as these convey once more a sense of the urgency with which parents need a childcare slot – eventually – but also the pressure the system generates to seek one early. The above strategy of paying more hours than one takes served affluent family-oriented parents as a way to circumvent these pressures – at their own expense.

Within the same debate, childcare practitioners often hold a similar position as parents:

Alexa: “societally it would need to change that employers have more understanding for family, and more for employees, who have a family . I think we are running into the wrong direction. I don’t have anything against extending opening hours, or to change them, and to say some need them more in the morning, earlier. we are open from 7:00, some need the evenings, until 18:00 or 19:00. But I slowly have a problem that now overnight is coming, because parents are also nurses, and so on and so forth . so I really have a problem with that, because the children are not regarded anymore. The children are not regarded anymore [...] personally I think our society should rethink that children are important, and that children are part of things . and that we don’t just optimise opening times (Betreuungszeiten), but also create more space for parents to spend time with their children, without having a *bad conscience*. That is the key issue.” (I18, 8:32-10:10, emphasis added)

Important here is again to emphasise the effects of feeling guilty as an indication for an irreconcilability not just between schedules, but also between the moralities that inform how parents should spend their time.

In sum: Whereas there is a consensus amongst parents that slightly more flexible hours would be good, parents whose work is largely within current opening hours resist radical expansions to protect their family life, whereas parents who depend on atypical working times would need that coverage to be able to work in their occupations at all. Different schedules amongst occupational groups thus create divergent preferences to childcare availability. Whereas the schedules of work and family life are still reasonably well-synchronised for parents in more or less traditional employment and family structures, including gender roles, atypical employment trends and more diverse family types have undermined this reconcilability for many others. This is visible in the daily broken temporal interfaces of diverging institutional schedules. In other words, there is a disintegration of the Fordist alignment of ‘spheres’, which becomes noticeable in conflicting demands on human availabilities and flexibilities.

Measures to ameliorate conflicts emerging from a trend towards an adult-worker-model need not just address technical problems of synchronisation, but also political opposition from families under traditional forms of social security. Narrower Kita opening hours make an indirect contribution to these forms of social security, because they limit legitimate expectations of flexibility from employers towards parents. Thus these schedules preserve aspects of the framework of the (gendered) standard working week, and the class compromise behind it. At the same time the inflexibility of parents, especially mothers, has been widely discussed as a limit to their emancipation through labour market participation (Streeck, 2009; Wanger, 2011; Morel, 2007; Weigt, 2006). The tension between advocates and opponents of extended opening hours must thus be contextualised in this broader conflict over the time family vis-à-vis paid work should take up in fathers' and mothers' lives.

In addition to what I have discussed so far, another aspect of public childcare schedules should be mentioned. What children and practitioners do in the everyday of the Kita should not remain a black-box in the consideration of policy-makers and academics. The daily life in the Kita has its own schedule for children and practitioners, which can run into conflict with flexibilisation, as the following passage illustrates:

Anna: "...we always arrived . 9:30, 10:00, 11:00 . and at some point the Kita said: no, we would like that he is present at 9:00 for the morning circle. And then we said that is absurd . if we are off work . if we have different working times, I have to work in the afternoons and evenings, there I don't see my child, but have the mornings off [...] one can read everywhere . regarding U3 Kita . are you doing bad things to the children, well . everywhere one can read spend as much time as possible with your children . and now I get problems from you? [...] there we first had to break up an imagine . parents who don't bring their children at 9:00, there one is in a box (Schublade), there is something going from at home. They don't get out of bed . uh, they have some kind of problems. And then we had to explain a life situation . that through the artistic-pedagogic occupations we have a . a completely different rhythm. [...] that was difficult . uh, for the Kita . they then always [missing verb] child-wellbeing – but in part that was ostensible [...] it was a mix of thinking about the

child, but it is also more difficult for them to organise, albeit I don't see it that way. It is more . well . in the way of thinking" (I22b, 0:00-4:00)

The flexible needs of parents interfere with a collective management of children in the Kita. There is no consensus over the consequences with regard to child-wellbeing, parent-wellbeing, and the appropriate temporal demands between children, parents, employers, and care workers. In the overall societal dynamic that Germans are experiencing in the last decade, whatever transition is happening has not yet solidified into a comprehensive new temporal order. The Kita structures and parts of the economy uphold the Fordist working week, with smaller adjustments, whereas another fraction of society is moving somewhere else. The question for politics is to what extent 'flexibility' can be a sustainable and healthy way for a society to go on together, or whether improvements for universal reconcilability require a stronger collective temporal grid with certain fix-points to orient expectations more effortlessly and harmoniously.

Conceiving of social policy in explicit 'everyday' time budgets might have the added benefit of making political debate more relatable in an everyday context for citizens. A direct discussion of time budgets would force a clearer demarcation of (proposed) gender and class relations, and could help to democratically establish new valuations of activities, their monetary compensation, and scheduling needs, as well as images of a 'good-life-balance'.

5.4 Practitioner Perspectives: Quality Management between Text and Talk

This last section of the analysis is dedicated to public childcare from a practitioner and provider perspective. The focus here is not on pedagogic practice, but on the managerial and administrative processes in Kitas. These processes entail coordination between managers, practitioners, and parents; and reporting requirements from Kitas to government and provider organisation, including *quality management* (QM), which is a topic I will focus on below. By QM, practitioners denote the manifold documentation requirements recent reforms have introduced as standard and required practice. The reporting of certain indicators, internally and

to the wider public, fits with the overall techniques of governing subsumed under the label *new public management*:

“Although ill defined, the term ‘new public management’ has been applied to ‘a set of broadly similar administrative doctrines which dominated the bureaucratic reform agenda in many of the OECG group of countries [...] Regulation and accountability of professional practice are reflected in the abundance of processes, procedures, monitoring and audit systems which feature strongly in much of the new public management schema. Increased scrutiny by the media has also exacerbated focus on benchmarks and performance indicators.” (Burton and van den Broek, 2009, p. 1328)

New public management as a set of *textual* practices is a phenomenon to which Institutional Ethnography, and the concern how relations of ruling become institutionalised through texts, fits particularly well as a methodology (as discussed in 2.3.1). Dealing with administrative and managerial processes furthermore brings up the conceptual question whether one is talking about *governing*, *policy implementation*, or *enactment*. The most problematic term in this list is ‘or’. To clarify what I connote with these terms: governing should be understood in terms of Foucault’s *gouverner/conduct* (2.3.1), pointing to the *how* of ‘good governance’, and the importance of ideas and discourse in creating and distributing the morality and telos directing daily interactions.

By implementation, the established literature tends to conceive of *problems* that policies are meant to resolve. This problem-solving logic is perpetuated in how

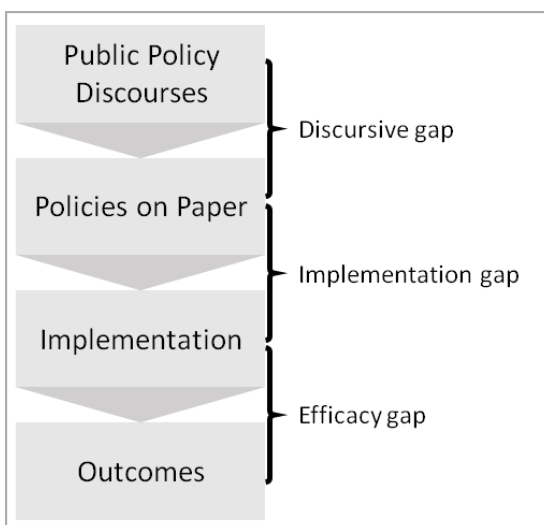


Figure 19 Policy Gaps, adapted from Czaika & De Haas (2013)

implementation research develops conceptual bodies and research methods. A good example is given by Czaika & De Haas (2013) model of policy gaps (see Figure 19). The authors display policy as a sequential process from agenda setting, policy formulation, over administrative implementation, down to measurable outcomes. Implementation studies have been seen as a “missing

link” between parliamentary policy making and ‘street-level’ administration, the gap between “the state’s policy promises and the state’s policy products” (Hjern 1982 and Brodtkin 1990 in Schofield, 2001; see also Brodtkin, 1997; Hjern and Porter, 1981; Matland, 1995; Sabatier and Mazmanian, 1980).

Writing about “how schools do policy” (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012), Ball criticises that whereas policy making is understood as a political (contesting, negotiating, and creative) process, implementation is too often theoretically reduced to compliance and effectiveness. Thereby implementation studies are limited to a normative type of enquiry that assesses the success of governments to bring about certain predefined outcomes. The contest, negotiation, and creative acts that take place during implementation are marginalised. To distinguish studies that thematise such local or translocal political co-construction from studies that follow the problem-solving logic, Ball uses the term ‘enactment’:

“we want to ‘make’ policy into a process, as diversely and repeatedly contested and/or subject to different ‘interpretations’ as it is *enacted* (rather than implemented) in original and creative ways within institutions [...] but in ways that are limited by the possibilities of discourse” (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012, pp. 2–3, emphasis added)

Policy understood this way is both text (artefact) and discursive-interactive process, “contextually mediated and institutionally rendered”, complexly encoded and decoded, interpreted and recontextualised (ibid, p.3). Policies are not just ideational, but also material (as artefacts, as bodily enactments). Within networks of dialogical interactions, policies constrain possible creative responses in situ. They thus engender selectivities. These theoretical frames take us back to the dialogical constructivism I have outlined in chapter 2. The focus in this study lies on enactment, rather than implementation. This does not exclude speaking about problems and solutions, or evaluating reforms by their everyday outcomes - but it does so in consideration of how policies direct, limit, and enable local actors, such as managers and childcare practitioners, to do their work.

In the following sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2 I will discuss ideas and concepts informing the enactment of public childcare management on different levels. I will explain key

quantitative indicators used to measure policy outputs, including child assessment procedures, and how these function in the everyday of Kitas. In section 5.4.3 I will move on to governing styles and interaction, ultimately pointing to a conflict between standards of good practice and time budgets.

5.4.1 Quantities and Qualities of Change

The contemporary debate has highlighted the scarcity of public childcare slots in many German municipalities, most notably in cities. The right to public childcare for U3 has increased the pressure on municipalities to meet expansion targets. This is the case even more so since the Federal Court of Justice (BGH) (Bundesgerichtshof, 2016) and the Federal Administrative Court (BVG) (Bundesverwaltungsgericht, 2013) have enabled parents to sue municipalities for compensation on lost earnings and additional private childcare costs if municipalities fail to provide public childcare. Whereas claims for compensation on lost earnings are expected to remain exceptional cases (Rath, 2016), the youth welfare agency of Cologne perceives increasing lawsuits for private childcare cost compensation as parents become more aware of the BVG judgment through the media (I2). As a result, the agency is under tremendous pressure from parents and higher-level government to expand provision in terms of slots, that is, of quantity. In consequence qualitative concerns often cannot receive the consideration that state agencies, providers, practitioners, and parents would like to see. As Burton & van den Broek (2009) have emphasised in their study on new public management and digitalisation in social work, an 'application of mass production methods to human services' brings up ethical concerns between the attention given to quantitative and qualitative targets. There is a concern that quantitative indicators by themselves are insufficient as steering instruments to enable constructive local enactment, creating a work dynamic of meeting indicators rather than substantive targets. Top-down micro management by indicators also prevents local stakeholders from more democratic forms of target-setting and cooperation.

In Germany the debate over appropriate ages and desirable care forms (family/KTP/Kita) carries over into a debate on quality in childcare facilities; any

response to the former debate is dependent on how public care is designed qualitatively. Next to a scarcity of slots, therefore, Germans criticise the conditions under which public childcare is provided. The aim of this section is to convey along which ideas (incl. *indicators*) this critique takes place.

A key quantitative indicator to assess quality is the *staff-child ratio* (Personalschlüssel), which is improving slowly in the long-term trend. For U3 children, the ratio in the former East with 6.1 in 2015 and 6.0 in 2017 children per carer is almost twice as high as in West Germany, where it remained constant at 3.7 (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2015b, 2017). For Ü3 children, ratios improved in the East from 8.9 to 8.5, and in the West from 12.4 to 12.2. These results are still above Bertelsmann's recommendation of 3:1 for U3 and 7.5:1 for Ü3 (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2017), which are similar to EU and German government recommendations (BMFSFJ, 2016).

In practice, childcare managers I interviewed often only took two children below age one into a group, which is the same number as staff present. These children were referred to as "Armkinder" (arm children) who spent much of the day in immediate physical proximity to the carer, often in a baby carrier (I18, 35:59-37:49). The carer for children below two was always the same person, as recommended by attachment theory. This small example already conveys that staff-child ratios are a "necessary, but insufficient" (Bock-Famulla, Strunz and Löhle, 2017, p. 8) indicator for how quality should be enacted by practitioners. The interpretive space left open by abstract indicators needs to be filled in the everyday. As an example of how parents thought about quality, Imke and Thomas description is telling:

Thomas	... well proximity was the most important, so that it fits from the logistics and friends, and then it needed to have niveau.
Imke	Yes, I found the KTP carer myself online. She certainly did not have the educational level (Bildungsniveau), but she had heart. And I was friends with her a little. So I could trust her, and then I could also leave the child with her. Yes.
Nina	You said "niveau" regarding Kita earlier, what did you mean by that?
Thomas	Hm . niveau means first that the team fits, that there is a sensible leadership, who so to say also have a plan, what they want to do with the children and that the team is overall in agreement. That it is not like . so to say that there are people inside, who were ordered there, but who like working together, also because there is such a high stress (Belastung) with

	the children uh . and that they, so to say, have a unity, because, that also tilts . that it is not completely mixed up . well, we occasionally notice that Tuesdays there is another carer [...] where the children are outside often, there we also have had sick ones . she has a different format. So an education concept (Erziehungskonzept) . and also autonomy . in there, no neglect, to care, but not overdo that (kümmern, nicht bekümmern)
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(I24, 1:07:49-1:10:07)

In Imke and Thomas' narrative, *quality* ('niveau') is associated with the *qualification* of carers, a holistic professional conception, consequent leadership, and working conditions that moderate the stress of childcare work. Quality is hence something local Kita staff is responsible for. In conversation with childcare managers, it became clear that the U3 reform was difficult to handle in terms of quality, because the care for U3 children is rather different than for Ü3 children. Relating to a child with respect when changing nappies, or an inability to communicate verbally, had not been part of many educators' qualification. When the reform came, said most managers, training programs were set up in insufficient quantity and speed.

In NRW the expansion to U3 was accompanied by a relocation of afternoon care for school children into the schools (Horte). Hence in many facilities, staff who had previously worked with school children were suddenly asked to care for infants (I18, 11:31-13:36). This adjustment did not only need reskilling, but was also experienced by some as a depreciation of their work. As one carer admitted, working with older children yielded "demonstrable results" such as drawings, whereas working with infants was perceived in terms of care rather than education (I19). I have already mentioned that care was seen as lower in status than education (3.4). Practitioners complained in general about the low recognition they received for their work. Many associated this with their professional status on apprenticeship level (not university). Not only did this status translate into relatively low wages and tariff classifications (5.3.2.3), it also impacted the recognition of their expertise and authority by parents (I19).

5.4.2 Quality Management and Child Development

In addition to staff ratios and qualification, quality in care is increasingly defined in terms of *child development outcomes*, as they are assessed in developmental psychology. This particular perspective has become institutionalised recently in the

form of quality management systems in Kitas, which routinely document children's capabilities. Practitioners are thereby tasked to bring out children's' potential through good pedagogic practice.

The KiBiz reform created the obligation for practitioners to monitor child development in a formal documentation system (Bildungsdokumentation, KiBiz §13b), the methods of which can be chosen by the individual provider or Kita. The obligation for evaluation has been implemented together with KiBiz §11 and §12, which prescribe a written pedagogical conception for each Kita, along with documentation systems to monitor quality improvements (Landtag NRW, 2007). The problem that childcare managers reported to me is that any intensification of documentation requirements costs time. Such 'indirect tasks' (mittelbare Tätigkeiten) related to childcare, in addition to illness, holidays, and training take up at least 25% of total working time of childcare practitioners (Bock-Famulla, Lange and Strunz, 2015, p. 25), which has a substantial impact on real staff-child ratios, as opposed to the formal ones summarised above. A study that aimed to measure the exact share of indirect work (Viernickel *et al.*, 2013) concluded that due to the complexity and degree of differentiation of answers in their survey-based study, it was impossible to develop reliable statements about the share of indirect tasks relative to work immediately with the children. My participants suggested unanimously that the volume of indirect tasks had increased substantially due to higher documentation requirements. Whereas documentation and other policy changes were in principle viewed positively, the lack of additional staff to fulfil the requirements was seen as a loss of time available to children.

Children's development documentation is integrated into the everyday routines of Kitas. It assesses the child's practices, ideas, creative products and problem solving capabilities, in line with the core competencies identified in the SOA (see p. 210). Assessment is meant to support development oriented to individual strengths. The documentation can be made available to primary schools if parents agree (Landtag NRW, 2007§13b). Documentation practices pose a formalisation of developmental observation that already existed. Whereas such observation was seen as important,

the formalisation of it, especially the quantification some forms introduce, is viewed critically.

Barbara: “uh, well in principle we do it like this, also with the development observation forms . uh, we enter the conversation with the parent, and operate there entirely without numbers. [...] ultimately we are observing every day, and ultimately the educators are very well informed over the developmental stage of a child . the observation forms effectively only serve as a foundation to, uh, refine this. We use that in preparation for the parent-educator talk (Elterngespräch). Uh, because uh . what are the parents meant to do with numbers? [Nina:mh] . and numbers are very scary then, that quickly turns into the direction of marking [Nina: yeah-yeah] that means, this is for us always only a means to prepare the parent-talk, so that we can then reflect with the parents: what the child can already do well, where does the child still need support. And then is always the uh next question, which targets and measures can we implement in the Kita [...] what can you do at home . completely adjusted to the living situation” (I15, 22:31-27:27)

Practitioners recounted the experience that parents tend to focus on a child’s weaknesses rather than strengths, if categories are displayed quantitatively in scales or tick-off boxes, which practitioners connoted negatively as ‘marking’. Instead many favoured a written assessment in which they could qualitatively emphasise the strengths and contextualise them in an observation of the ‘whole child’ (I19). Practitioners were deeply concerned to create an account of a child that is holistic and well-reflected, and addressed the problem of time scarcity to appropriately carry out these documentation practices without cutting down the time of their ‘actual job’ of tending to the children’s needs (I17, 31-34:26). In many cases, they criticised the interest primary schools took in wanting access to developmental documentations when selecting children. Whereas the majority of parents do not share these documents with schools, practitioners indicated that some parents had started using them to promote their children to a school of choice.

Childcare practitioners argued their negative attitude with recourse to a principle of ‘taking them as they come’ and a respectful relation to children that footed in the understanding of children as subjects, not objects (I19). Practitioners with religious

affiliation called this the 'Christian human image'. Some perceive the rights and interest of children being neglected in discourses about childcare, and empirically it is rather obvious that whereas children's rights are mentioned, children are rarely given voice in expressing what kind of childcare and educational possibilities they like outside the home.

In contrast to holistic views of the child stands a pressure to qualify children as future workers. This follows from the political decision to posit the labour market as the central integrating institution into society. This view is not just abstractly relevant for policy-makers and employers, but personally conflicting for parents and practitioners. In order to give children the education they need to succeed in integrating into society they are tasked to direct and assess children's development. That there is a conflict between different ideas of 'development' and educational styles becomes visible in the context of 'Förderwahn'⁶⁴. The meaning of the concept can be illustrated by the following examples:

Julian: "... today it is unfortunately very performance-oriented, and that children have no or little time to . to complete their inner blueprint . because simply everything has to be controlled externally: parents always to have the power over this, like you are one year now – now you have to be able to do that, you are two now – you now have to be able to do that – uh, some children simply are – or I will put it that way: children have their own blueprint, and with some it just takes a this long, and with others that long . and uh . yes, therefore one always has to consider . we have a lot of parents who do . a great many things for their children. There is gymnastics, and swimming, always on one day. And family café, and mother café, and such things, which are of course also pretty nice . for the parents. Uh, for the children that is often simply too much. " (I33, 29:59-32:46)

While giving a range of examples that support the idea that Förderwahn is a frequent issue, Julian also asserted that this 'trend' had shifted. The existence of the term 'Förderwahn', which has a clear negative connotation, itself suggests that a critical attitude has gained purchase. Today, Julian suggested (I33, 39:15-40:39) many parents tried to "let their children be children", and paid attention to giving

⁶⁴ Literal translation: support craze, or nurturing madness

them “autonomy”. Whereas one sports course or instrument a week is still seen as beneficial, one should not overburden one’s child with parents’ ambitions. Other commentaries provide a mixed image, however, in how far the trend has passed:

Alexa: “and of course also the Förderwahn, that is a big topic. [...] since the PISA study I sometimes think: oh god, well . really, we get asked if we could not teach the children Chinese, [...] . and it . it always become more . [...] more . this support program, that support program . you could do this, or do that as well . and I don’t accuse the parents, the parents are afraid that their children will miss the boat . and I find that, well, I find that frightening sometimes . what is all demanded from children. There are children here who go to a course four times a week [...] and that is free-time stress [...] I will say, the play, and that . for children it is very important to, right, to process, to stick with things, to live out their own interests, that is not seen anymore – but only due to the fear, right, they need to be supported . that this [play] is the right kind of support, that is sometimes lost in the perspective of the parents”
(I18, 28:25-33:09)

The distinction Alexa makes between courses and play refers to the insights of Fröbel (5.1.1), who established free play as a key aspect of good pedagogic practice (Aden-Grossmann, 2011). The legacy of democratic/humanist thought is clearly noticeable. The centrality of play in ECEC marks one of the clearest distinctions to course-based, school-like education. The comparison between Kita and school also reconnects the anxiety of some practitioners in how far documentation translates into marking. The fundamental issue is the assessment of children in formal terms, which appear in documentation forms⁶⁵. A source of ideas what constitutes performance comes from developmental psychology, the categories of which are then transformed into ranking categories (e.g. Figure 20). Julian’s reference to ages and abilities draws on models of developmental stages that can be found in most parenting advice literature, and derive from Piaget’s seminal work (1970).

⁶⁵ The state initiative “Bildung durch Sprache und Schrift” (BiSS) and the Staatsinstitut für Frühpädagogik (IFP) have compiled forms that evaluate literacy, for instance seldak. Generally, literacy, motor skills, and social skills are evaluated.

F Kommunikatives Verhalten in Gesprächssituationen*		sehr oft	oft	manchmal	selten	sehr selten	nie
1	Kind ist in seinem Sprachgebrauch taktvoll, höflich; sagt z. B. „danke“, „bitte“, „könnte ich mal“....	6	5	4	3	2	1
2	stellt sich in Tonfall und Lautstärke auf verschiedene Situationen und Gesprächspartner ein, z. B. Erzieherin, jüngere Kinder, Besucher	6	5	4	3	2	1
3	nimmt beim Sprechen Blickkontakt auf	6	5	4	3	2	1
4	versucht in schwierigen Situationen, z. B. bei Konflikten, das, worum es geht, auch sprachlich zu fassen	6	5	4	3	2	1
5	erzählt so, dass es für andere Kinder interessant ist	6	5	4	3	2	1

Figure 20 Seldak example (Ulich and Mayr, 2006)

Textual practices around the child, performed by practitioners, recreate a certain knowledge about children, which is focused on skill assessment. But interpretative spaces and the limitation of what is effectively put into writing shape what image of a child is conveyed. The reactions of parents, anxieties of practitioners, and interest of schools suggests that even in ECEC, these formalised forms of assessment begin to matter and shape a child's trajectory into school, and consequently into life. Therefore it is concerning that practitioners and managers report issues with finding the time to responsibly discuss and fill out these forms. What regulation needs to consider is how these activities should be scheduled next to the core business of childcare, and that attractive and good quality working conditions require more time for practitioners to interact *without* children present.

5.4.3 Formalisation, Dialogic Coordination, and Participation

Barbara: “a good educator has always already worked with a certain standard and uh . those standards are now set legally in a different way, which means uh [...] the law now demands things, which a good educator has generally has always done . the standards and legal requirements [...] quality management was not a topic 20 years ago . still we worked towards a complaint management then . not that a quality management handbook would have existed, right – that . if one worked with a certain attitude uh . that is not such a bi:ig change [long pause] [Nina: can one say now that...] more forms, many . uh [Nina: mhm] well . quality management always brings a lot of forms with it . uh . certain legal requirements bring many more forms with them . uh . the controls have gotten tighter [mhm] so . uh . the health and safety agencies come and do- [Nina: so it is . well . more formalised?] – it is more formalised . yes! . one can say it that way mhm” (I15, 6:32-8:03)

Barbara’s statement sums up an experience all practitioners I interviewed had made in the last decade. Their work became more *formalised*. In NRW, KiBiz §11 and §12 prescribe a written pedagogical conception for each Kita, along with documentation systems to monitor quality improvements, to be administered by the providers (Landtag NRW, 2007). This means that more activities in practitioner’s daily working lives are now subject to written rules, to which the demonstration of compliance is equally carried out in writing. In the social sciences, formalisation has been discussed in terms of making cooperation possible and more efficient, but also as a set of practices through which *representation* work can be done, for instance by representing accountability (Brown, 2001). The formalisation of business processes is a key aspect of modern management: it is a precondition and accompanying element to the introduction of enterprise resource planning software and the automation of knowledge processing that informs accounting. As Brown informs us, documentation in workplaces creates the discursive artefacts (e.g. time sheets) that make accounting “auditable”, that is, legitimately link the knowledge used to run financial accounts with everyday practices (ibid). Importantly, artefacts like time sheets do not represent time-use in detached objectivity: they are created within the interpretive play technologies (paper forms, computer databases) allow people,

and are filled out with an idea in mind about their purpose. As such, toilet breaks are not recorded, whereas work that needs to be allocated to a certain cost centre is recorded. “Common artefacts” (Robinson, 1993) of daily life, such as forms, take on a key role in cooperation and coordination. Forms are furthermore part of institutional rhythms. They are part of an organisations temporality through due dates, processing durations, and recurring reporting cycles. Brown, drawing on Foucault (1978)⁶⁶, acknowledges that whereas formalisation has often been treated in a negative light by academics, the relations of power formalisation impacts need to be analysed situatedly to assess their moral and political effects.

As a facet of new public management, standardised written forms, either in paper or digital, are omnipresent in Kitas. Forms existed for children (development documentation, nappy changing protocols, application forms), temporary staff (time sheets, report portfolios, personnel reviews and certificates) and permanent staff (training records, especially for recurring mandatory trainings for health and safety: occupational health, hygiene, fire, first aid), to name a subset (I15, 10:40-22:21).

Johanna: “one cannot lead a Kita today without a . without a PC and software, and I don’t know what . that . that has changed [...] [Nina: what software is that?] . that is . a special program. Well, ours is called Kitathek [...] which essentially manages the whole Kita” (I17, 1:34-11:24)

The necessity of computers has unsurprisingly increased in the last decades. However, as managers admitted, their use of specialist software was often restricted to admission management (for which the program “spits out” the forms, I17), and reporting interfaces to the state (KiBiz-Web). For many local practices, excel sheets were more practical, and were often used in printed form to be filled out during the day. The prevalence of paper is understandable. Given the general lack of offices in Kitas, save for the manager’s office, desktop computers are not present. Tablets could be used to replace paper forms eventually, without needing

⁶⁶ See *The History of Sexuality*, pp. 92-102, for Foucault’s understanding of resistance as immanent to relations of power, and tactics as locally situated logics of struggle.

to make much space for them. To date, however, the degree of digitalisation in Kitas is relatively low.

Next to the forms used in daily coordination locally, Kita managers were accountable to providers and state. Reporting requirements involve the booking/working hours of children and staff (Belegungszahlen, Fachkraftstunden), and health and safety certification, as mentioned previously, but also yearly public statistics, plus indicators providers directly demand from Kitas. Managers were accountable to provide these at certain times of the year, sometimes monthly, sometimes quarterly or yearly.

Johanna: “huh, and the only there is another new uh . from here, from the parish or the Church, from the regional Church is . there had to be something filled in, also a small statistic, NKF, that is such a new . calculation-calculation system? Uh, there I have to, well *target and current numbers* (soll und ist-zahlen), and uh, *planned numbers*, uh, how often parent interactions [...], how many colleaguges and such things, all such things . and uh, once a year I write a QM report just for the parish, that is a bit more detailed” (1:17:21-1:18:10)

Johanna’s explanation reveals how quantitative indicators are recorded and reported to represent quality. The provision of target/planning numbers, and the visibility of gaps to current numbers, conducts the manager’s conduct towards a simplified idea of quality, expressed in indicators, that can be defined and communicated translocally. The reporting thus contributes to what kind of knowledge becomes available about Kitas, and how external actors perceive the Kita. Key indicators, for example staff ratios, then inform the statistical and governmental strand of public discourse, whereas personal experience of parents and practitioners inform another strand. Inbetween these groups, Kita managers have to reconcile these two kinds of knowledge towards a combined work knowledge that informs ‘good’ leadership. A striking comment about the extent, but also the representational effect of documentation as a tool of management (governing) was voiced by Barbara:

Barbara: “every step . which we take in the Kita, for that there are also at least one to two forms, which means that everything has to be documented, because this is also included in QM, *what is not documented was not done* . right, so that is also a basic principle of quality management, *only what is documented, is also . done* [...] there is also in internal revision from the AWO, where is it checked if all processes and all forms to the processes are present . right, and this report then also goes to the management” (I15, 28:31-29:53, emphasis added)

This quote illustrates the mandatory character of documentation, and the pressure on Kita managers to demonstrate compliance with quality standards. While it is certainly possible to circumvent regulation, such instances were not reported to me. Rather, managers were concerned to present orderliness and rigour, even with standards they were frustrated with, as part of their image as capable, law-abiding, and upright professionals⁶⁷. Great emphasis was placed in several occasions on explaining that harmony among colleagues, but also in the relation to parents, was important to care well for children. In the following sections I will discuss how managers sought to lead in order to create the greatest possible harmony. The instances in which accounts of managers revealed conflicts are consequently of particular interest, because they yield a pattern of causes that disrupt these efforts for harmonious coordination.

Two key sources for conflicts are, firstly, unpredictability, and secondly, a clash of interaction styles. The former affects the friction between plannable and unplannable workloads, the latter of which are abundant in social work with children and families. The second source pertains to an ideal of participation and democratic (read: discussion-heavy) coordination among local stakeholders. This ideal clashes with the temporal constraints skill-shortages, restrictive funding, and formalisation requirements jointly generate. Simply put, practitioners criticise the lack of time to talk to each other as colleagues, to jointly plan the Kita work. Apart from functional aspects, discussion is important to practitioners as a way to harmonise interpersonal relations, and feel acknowledged and involved in creating

⁶⁷ That the moral integrity of childcare practitioners is above-average important is also visible in extra regulation, such as the necessity to have a police certificate of good conduct.

a shared environment. Their understanding of good governance depends heavily on talking, whereas regulation increasingly emphasised writing. There is thus a conflict in how reality should be made meaningful between these two forms of language, which techniques should be used to coordinate daily interaction, and quite literally, who has 'a say' in how things should be done.

5.4.3.1 Managing Unpredictability

The key limitation of governing by standards and forms is their inapplicability to the unexpected. Among the first questions I asked practitioners was: "What is a normal work day like for you?" The question tended to result in laughter, followed by an explanation that 'normal days' did not exist in a Kita. Managers recounted arriving at work to remove dead rodents from the street, fix sinks, or console parents over the death of an unborn child (I17). Such relative singularities, in great variety, were a kind of regularity of local life. How the regular and the unpredictable meet in the everyday, and how this is experienced by Kita managers, is revealed by Barbara's account:

Barbara: "well there are no normal days in that sense . uh . tellingly . for example this morning a situation . I am here . one hour before my supposed begin of work . in the hope of being able to write a few emails, in peace, then already had a . a uh mother with a nervous breakdown in my office . and a mother uh who is having her labour induced today, with a fever-sick child [...] on her arm. [...] well I have recurring activities naturally, legal obligations I have to meet, paperwork I need to do, deadlines I need to keep, and uh . all that is interrupted by . uh, yes, the life that is rampaging around me [...] if something happens, I need to be available at any time. We are a family centre, and I understand myself here that way . that I am the contact person for all families, not only through organised courses, but especially uh, contact person uh . when the shoe pinches (wenn der schuh drückt) . and hence the day is always very lively and actually uh not necessarily structurability by me . so I have my to-do lists for the day . bu:ut it is, well that is permanently interrupted by . something" (I15, 1:38-3:39)

What Barbara describes as permanent interruption and a lack of structurability of her daily work must be viewed in context of how she makes herself available to the

people around her. As she adds to the previous statement, her “time scarcity is homemade”. While there are many demands on her representing and leading the Kita and family centre (see p.197), she points out that she could handle those well enough if she were to close her office door (I15, 3:52-5:55). But having her “own idea to one’s role”, she depicts her business as the intentional result of enacting a communication-intensive style of management. Next to the ‘open door for everyone’, this entails taking part in projects⁶⁸. Given that she has the autonomy to decide whether or not she wishes to partake in these, she portrayed this as a positive stress. It is worth mentioning that Barbara had a very good relation to her superior managers, shaped by mutual respect and support for her own ideas.

Time scarcities were also discussed with other Kita managers. On the question of how these came about, Johanna (I17) suggested that time management was a core issue, also psychologically.

Johanna: “that I have to spontaneously decide very quickly, or that I am constantly the whole day somehow . hm, have to set priorities, and what is currently the most important . uh, so I would say that this really requires a great deal of flexibility and uh . not only I say that, but for example also my colleague who has the substitution [as manager], she says: I couldn’t do this, because I’m not like you. Well uh, you can adapt yourself more quickly to new things, you can also more quickly . react more confidently than I would and then say . and, actually what then economically uh . it does not make a big difference in earnings, what I get more as a manager” (I17, 18:31-20:45)

What resurfaces here as a key aspect of everyday experience is a conflict between expectations to meet predictable and standardised targets and the unpredictability of daily life with children. Dealing with multiple (spontaneous) demands requires flexibility, adaptability, and confidence. A point to which I will return in the following, and which has briefly featured in Barbara’s account, is the importance of communication to harmonise social relations in these local *and translocal* settings, but also the time ‘open door’ policies require.

⁶⁸ At the time of the interview, she had applied for an additional “Bundesprojekt” for language learning.

5.4.3.2 Managing Participation

All childcare managers reported an ideal of a participatory leadership style that involves a preference to ‘talking about things together’ as a form of coordination and legitimation. Many reported that these ideals were part of their pedagogic identity and thought them to be the only way amongst ‘us’.

Alexa: “uh, it is the case that we really develop things together, that we also reflect the topics we have fixed, and then say again: haven’t we considered this nicely, but it wasn’t so optimal after all. We take a step back and look again how we can proceed now differently. So . it has to be that way. Well, especially in . in such *a profession as ours* it would not work differently, because *the people who work here* are wired that way (so gestrickt). So we naturally preferably want it all to be harmonious . and uh, yes, like to discuss everything through (durchdiskutieren).” (I18, 22:44-24:30, emphasis added)

Barbara: “we all would like that we uh feel comfortable in the team, but not such a pseudo comfort [Nina: hehe, well yes] one smiles at each other and has a grumble in the belly . but uh . a kind of comfort because we actively engage [mhm] . utter anger and uh . enter into conflicts, so . we always say we have to clean the air [hehe] and it does not work, that one somehow collects irritations and does not utter it (aussprechen) . [mhm] . because that only makes a bad atmosphere . uh . and the people who come into the house feel that too . because that . that is truly palpable then also in the work atmosphere [yes] . and that is uh . essential in working with children, because they feel this first if there is any kind of disturbance . in the air” (19:41-23:56)

Face to face discussions fulfill an important function by providing the opportunity to (re)balance emotions between colleagues and other stakeholders. This aspect is decisive for the ability of the practitioner teams to maintain a harmonious environment for children to grow up in. These discussion-intensive forms of interaction recur in management/leadership/governance relations on different local levels: between teams and managers in the Kita, but also between managers in regional meetings, and *sometimes* between managers and providers.

Alexa: “naturally there are conflicts [...] because pedagogues naturally want something different than business administrators . that . that simply is so hehe . that are different species of human [...] I believe there is a healthy dosage so that . uh . there are points, where we have friction, where the board wants something different than maybe . the Kita managers, who is here in place and naturally- who is in direct contact with the families, and in direct contact with the children, and colleagues, and parents . uh, that is always the case. Who somewhere, in quotation marks, I don’t mean that negatively, only sit at the desk, and have a different idea of the system.” (20:15-21:43)

As Alexa describes, and I believe this to be an essential point from the perspective of IE, the daily work spaces and interactions of pedagogues and off-site managers create substantially different experiences, and are informed (by previous education and by ongoing different experiences) by different work knowledges. This consideration must be expanded to policy makers, who are often even more distant from local relations of childcare. Work knowledges include different priorities, and possibly contrasting preferences over managerial styles and time allocations to different media of knowledge exchange. My study cannot cover these aspects in great breadth, but more research into this junction would be highly relevant. One example I gathered from U. Volland-Dörmann, CEO of the AWO Köln, is rather telling in how frictions between different work knowledges and styles of interaction can be bridged.

Volland-Dörmann recounted the shift from GTK to KiBiz as not quite a revolution, but a substantial step away from the “conservative corner” Germany had remained in (I34, 48:40-51:16). Managing this shift as a provider included taking parents and employees on board. For parents, this centrally meant informing them of changes, whereas the discussion with pedagogical staff amounted to a deeper discussion of values, especially regarding the age appropriate care of U3 children. Rather than producing “a lot of paper”, she enacted change through an interactive process of “learning by doing”. A key change she perceived was the introduction of a service-oriented market logic into non-statutory welfare provision, which required a change to the fundamental understanding of the AWOs work. Communicating change of that magnitude was done through a series of strategy days, throughout which she

“locked herself up with her employees for a day” (I34, 4:27-6:40 + 39:54-44:52). A first exercise was a role play in which Kita managers were asked to pretend they were parents looking for a childcare slot, and discuss which features would be important to them. This introduced a customer-oriented mentality to the subsequent discussions how the AWO’s Kitas should be reorganised to be “market conforming”. The latter was associated by Volland-Dörmann with the 45h booking time; on the one hand because it enabled to employ practitioners in full-time so that they could live off their earnings; and on the other hand it enabled parents to work fulltime, at least those employed in standard hours demanded by tariff agreements up to 42h per week, including commutes. Hence the AWO Köln rejected the shorter booking times of 25h or 35h per week⁶⁹. Implementing these changes required informing parents that booking 45h did not enforce using up those hours. Discussions with practitioners and parents were held in each single Kita by the CEO and senior department managers in person, and subsequent offers were made for senior management to return and support local managers and employees, should additional conflict arise. Volland-Dörmann insisted that personal interaction in developing processes and managing Kitas in the everyday was essential to motivation. Furthermore staff remembered changes better if they had been jointly developed, as opposed to being presented with written process instructions. Among Kita managers, who were often alone with certain problems in their Kita, networking was encouraged (I34, 1:23:00-1:25:59). The more frequent regulatory changes happened, the more complex it became to keep everyone on board. Especially since 2008, Volland-Dörmann suggested, the pace of changes had been fast.

The time required for meetings and personal exchange is not calculated into current HR planning, as Barbara’s ‘open door’ exemplified: She reported that if she closed her office door and did her job to meet formal requirements only, she would have regular working time (I15, 1:38-3:39). However, she said that accepted (legitimate) relations among staff, parents, network partners, and children required an ‘open

⁶⁹ I have discussed parents’ perspectives in sections 4.3.2.3 and 5.3.3.3.

door' practice that enabled local communication. This poses a problem when the tasks of practitioners are expanded to include extra work due to formalisation/documentation, as well as other ancillary procedures relating to hygiene, staff development and networking that affect managers in particular. Looking at the frequent over-hours of managers and the involvement of parents into work at the Kita (also see 4.4.2.2 and 5.3.2.1), it is appropriate to say that the current childcare systems relies heavily on volunteer work, also from its paid staff.

As intimated above, the role of formalisation can be enabling or restricting local agents, and normative judgment about its effects should be discussed situatedly. In the Kita context, QM was mostly reported as a change of practice only insofar as that previously existing tendencies had been regularised and put into written form. Consequently the underlying idea of improving quality and making Kitas accountable for quality was not disputed. Critique was voiced in terms of how much time these documenting procedures took away from the interaction with children and colleagues (I33).

Complaint management was described as the best part of QM (I15). An established process of handling complaints included training staff how to respond to complaints, which was practiced locally through role play. These trainings included helpful sentences and ways of dealing with one's own internal reaction and attitude. Further benefits of a set process were standards how to respond to complaints, the track ability of complaints, means to ensure that complaints were responded to quickly, and that all colleagues, including the manager, were informed, so that repeated parent mentions of complaints could be situated appropriately (I15, 33:41-34:55).

Negative perceptions of QM were not very directly voiced in interviews, but between the lines a certain kind of conflict becomes visible. Educators described a key attitude of their profession as one that emphasises local experience as expertise as a key complement to more centralised knowledges, such as their professional training. This is easily illustrated on the attitude, which seems to amount to a trope, that parents were the primary experts of their child. The point in the following is

not to assert whether or not this belief holds true, but to illustrate which kinds of conflicts practitioners faced in the relation towards parents.

Alexa: “I can only say from my understanding that I luckily always had the attitude . that I, uh, that I don’t find that educators, despite them having the vocational training, uh . know everything better about children . who are here in the house. I believe that *parents are the experts for their children*, and it can only function together . so it can’t be that educators say, you bad ones, what are you doing? You do everything wrong with your children, or: you do everything right. Because this does not exist: right or wrong in education, that is definitely so – because children are very different, because family situation are very different” (I18, 24:36-26:31)

Here it is worthwhile to point out that practitioners have rather limited power over parents; any cooperation needs to be voluntary. This type of ‘eye-level’ relation might in principle tend towards a more democratic style of coordination, as part of which expressions of mutual respect (who is the expert?) are exchanged equally. Secondly, knowledge based on local experience with individual children, the necessity to handle diversity in the everyday, needs to be reconciled with ‘generalisable’ knowledges about children.

Alexa: “... it is important to the parents that the children are well . at the same time conflicts emerge from that, because from a pedagogical perspective we have a different view on what is good for children than the parents. [for example:] we accompany the children during potty training (literally: while becoming dry) [...] when the decision comes from the child. So that means . children start at some point, then they want to use the potty, then they get curious, they observe . and sometimes there are parents, who have the target that their child should be dry at 2.5 years. But realistically, seen from the development psychological perspective, it is entirely sufficient if a child is dry at 3, and it is also okay if a child is 3 and 3 months or . it happens, it depends on the child.” (28:25-33:09)

When I hear parents talk around me, especially young and relatively inexperienced parents, they tend to compare what their children can already do. Conversations with family education staff (I27) pointed towards anxieties by parents over their children’s development respective to their age. In the interviews in particular mothers frequently told me how biannual parent talks at the Kita had confirmed for

them how well their child was doing in a number of dimensions that development documentation assesses (e.g. I22, I24, I28). So despite the fact that practitioners have little formal power over parents, their judgment clearly mattered to them, as already discussed in section 5.4.2. This suggests that their status as professionals does to some extent give them authority in the eyes of many parents, if not all.

Moving to the perspective of practitioners, the question what is good for children led more explicitly to a key concept of contemporary pedagogical discourses: participation. This does not just apply to parents, but also to the relation with children.

Alexa: “we adults often arrogate to know what is best for children [...] participation is a very, very big topic, that children help shape the everyday, and I’ll say: then they talk about excursion places, and we have already an idea – oh the kids are going to decide for this, right, well – and they decide for something else, and bring arguments why and how . so I always say: children are not stupid, they are just small. And these whole emotions, which they have, what is good for them, what they like, what gives them fun, that is like in an adult. And children express this, and can express it. And uh, sometimes there clash the adult world and the children’s world, and conflicts emerge from that, because we rather support the children’s world, and say we want to start from there” (I18, 28:25-33:09)

Another phrase that is commonly uttered in the same line of thought is ‘to meet children on eye-level’ (Kindern auf Augenhöhe begegnen). Prompted to give an example of what that means, Julian described a range of problems he identified with enacting ideas about the participation of children in the Kita’s everyday:

Julian: “much is heteronomous (fremdbestimmt), for example, one always talks about participation in the facility, but that is always a pseudo-participation [...] where one for example gives children only two choices . [Nina: hm?] – do you want to drink something warm or cold? Right and uh . yes, I find the enactment in the everyday always rather difficult, because naturally there are also . that has to do with it that sometimes there is too little time, or staff shortage are the usual problems. With us it is difficult because of the group structure: the children are here 5h a day, the children have 5h time . uh, to let themselves be cared for . and in these 5h are two meals . their nappies are changed . uh, there are offers, and then there is also free play . and

sometimes we also go out . so it is fully-packed . and sometimes there is real time scarcity . there is simply no time for other things, and then one simply decides over the children, uh . yes . because I find that in our facility, so it is the case that we include the children . very very much. I have for example not seen it that way in other facilities, where I did internships,” (I33, 17:44-20:49)

To summarise on section 5.4: Quality in public childcare was problematised from a temporal perspective, which emphasised that additional documentation requirements reduced the time practitioners can effectively spend with children, and thus childcare quality. Secondly, practitioners experienced conflict between what counts as work (for how much time) and what is paid. Scheduling work with and without children poses a problem in everyday life. This is exacerbated by the degree of unpredictable occurrences life in a Kita brings with it.

The experience of time scarcity is worsened by a local desire to coordinate relations through discussion-heavy, ‘democratic’ leadership and cooperation. This participatory ideal includes a perception of relations on ‘eye-level’. This equality in representation, however, does not necessarily capture the power balance between parents and practitioners: the former do sometimes perceive the latter as a source of authoritative knowledge. This is, however, not always the case, and often practitioners feel their expertise is undervalued. Secondly, the relation between practitioner and child is not egalitarian, even though efforts to see the child as capable are articulated frequently.

In conclusion, it is important to see how staff ratios and other indicators are not only insufficient to assess childcare quality: they are connected to the accounting systems in public administration described in section 5.3.2, which do not (from the perspective of practitioners) adequately recognise the work volumes Kitas need in order to function in line with democratic leadership and participatory practices. There is thus a tension between ‘quality’ measured in staff ratios, and the more complex understandings of good practice informing the everyday enactment of childcare. These ideas about good practice act as a point of resistance against policy prescriptions. On this ‘battlefield of hegemony’, too, it is clear that third-way policy discourses have not displaced professional pedagogic discourses.

6 Conclusion: Hegemonic Struggle and the Value of Caring

To recapitulate from the beginning, this dissertation set out to investigate reconcilability as a widespread complaint of working parents. Following the methodology of Institutional Ethnography, the assessment of conceptual needs happened subsequent to fieldwork and narrowed in on the leitmotivs 'Vereinbarkeit' and 'Kita-Mangel'. Two research questions emerged in the process:

1. How do German parents and childcare practitioners experience family-work reconcilability as 'time problems'?
2. How have the reforms of family policy 2004-2015 shaped these problems?

These questions drew particular attention to the widespread everyday problematisation of time (question 1). 'Studying up' from how parents constructed time problems, generative mechanisms were identified, many of which relate back to policy reforms in the last decade (question 2). Analysis further questioned how older/other structures of German society interacted with policy in informing everyday enactment. I addressed parental care in chapter 4, and public childcare in chapter 5.

First, I illustrated the German standard life course with reference to finding the 'right time' for parenthood within a career trajectory, and 'too early' motherhood, arguing for strong social selectivities that promoted a life course sequence of education-employment-parenthood (4.2). Drawing on life-course approaches, I also problematised how longer education created a rush-hour of life for professionals, which together with female biology and mothers' professional aspirations limited the time to have more than the norm of two children. Social and biological age are not well aligned for professionals.

Second, I moved on to discuss how parental leave policies shape a protected time after birth (4.3). I identified a 'vicious circle' between gendered expectations of employers that limited women's professional opportunities and couples' decisions for the lesser-earner to take longer leave. I concluded that policy measures to

enhance fathers' participation in active care (two daddy months) were too limited in scope to substantially challenge established gender relations. *Experiences* of irreconcilability clashed with *expectations* of improved reconcilability raised by public discourses, leading to incoherence between 'field and habitus' (2.2.4), which reduces agents' ability to orient strategically, accompanied by a sense of alienation (2.3.3). The gender-equal 'ideal' adult-worker-model is in practice not feasible, since business cultures maintain an ideal of the unencumbered worker. This discrepancy leads to perceptions of the adult-worker-model as dominant, rather than hegemonic, due to a lack of credibility/ legitimacy (2.3.1). Expectations exceed the availability of defamilialising childcare services, leaving families 'stuck' in a one-and-half-breadwinner-model. In the transition away from the male-breadwinner-model in the last decades, I emphasised the problem of asynchronous spheres; i.e. how schedules and temporal norms in the 'flexible' working world do not match those of the 'still-Fordist' family world.

Third, I expanded on this 'family world' or 'private sphere', problematising the visibility and division of domestic work (4.4). I analysed participant accounts in terms of family myths, i.e. the legitimations of participants' divisions of work, pointing out how these narratives mediated conflict between ideals and realities of gender equality. I emphasised how the time binds of specific tasks mattered to (dis-)empower agents, and how spontaneous care-giving remained familialised. Further I discussed how grandparents and volunteers contributed to shortages in parental and public care provision, and how the expansion of unencumbered adult-worker-model could further decrease the disposable time for such support in the future. These tendencies support the diagnosis of a crisis tendency (unsustainability) in German social reproduction, if not an acute state of crisis.

In chapter 5, I then narrowed in on institutional public childcare, especially in the form of the Kita. Fourth, I therein discussed a series of mechanisms or preconditions that shape the temporal experiences of parents and practitioners. I here discussed the institutional legacy of subsidiarity and non-statutory welfare providers, drawing out how ideological-social cleavages (intersectionality) continues to impact contemporary selectivities. I exemplified this on the strategies of the Catholic

Church, both in terms of slot allocation and provider politics (5.3.1, 5.3.2.2). I discussed in depth the funding of public childcare under KiBiz in NRW, drawing out the importance of local particularities of the decentralised system, such as in the height of parent contributions (5.3.2.1). In conclusion, I pointed out how strict price regulations and austerity budgets led to a chronic underfinancing of public childcare. Together with real economic factor shortages, notably skills shortage (5.3.2.3), the current regulation causes market failure in the shape of undersupply and insufficient impulses for growth. This judgments compounds the diagnosis of crisis tendencies made above, pointing further to an undervaluation of paid care as lamented by feminist (political) economists.

Fifth, I drew out how a series of temporal problems follow from these mechanisms or preconditions. Struggles between neo-familial and third-way ideologies revolve around the appropriate age of children's transition from familial to public childcare (5.3.3.1). The politics of this transition interact with the government's agenda for female labour market activation, and have lowered the age of transition. This, too, is by many parents experiences as domination, not 'consensual' hegemony. In this transition, I further discussed issues of predictability stemming from slot shortages, and asynchronicities between the right to childcare, the Kita-year, opening hours, and parents' working schedules (5.3.3.2, 5.3.3.3). These asynchronies, or various temporal scales, give a more nuanced account of change than the language of paradigms. Multifaceted implications of the timing of changes become more systematically accessible through this analytic lens.

Sixth, I turned to practitioners' and managers' perspectives on new regulation, which corresponds to what academia discusses as new public management (5.4). I highlighted here constructions of service quality through formalised quality management. This style of governance relies heavily on textual assessment, both in the administration of Kitas, and in the documentation of child development (5.4.2). My participants problematised the growth of textual practices as taking time away from 'core activities' of childcare and the need for face-to-face coordination (strategy days, meetings). I added to this how textual, formalised governance is

limited to deal with unpredictable workloads and poses limits to local democratic, participatory styles of coordination (5.4.3).

My findings suggest, in total, that even for the ‘most likely case’ of German professionals, the hegemony of the adult-worker-model remains in doubt. While ideas of economic independence and gender equality conveyed in public discourses are deeply influential in professional milieus, parents’ everyday experiences do not match with how ‘gender equal’ adult-worker life is *supposed* to be. The *inconsistency between raised expectations and given experiences* is most notable in the scarcity of public childcare for infants *despite* a formal right to a Kita slot since 2013. Facts such as this undermine the credibility of the current German policy regime to realise its promises, and consequently its struggle for hegemony. The adult-worker ideology is under challenge by the previous conservative norm, as well as by left and pedagogical ethics that oppose the centrality of economic reasoning in the German discourse on reconcilability associated with the adult-worker-model. This result suggests, first, that Dorothy Smith’s (2.2.2) insistence to valorise local everyday experience as an emancipatory strategy against the “relations of ruling” in public discourse is crucial here to draw attention to everyday problems of gender quality and ‘good life’; secondly, it suggests that the German transition towards an adult-worker-model, as proposed by accounts of a paradigm shift (e.g. Fleckenstein, 2011), is overstated and not yet certain. Not in the least a rise of right-wing political forces and their anti-feminist leanings should give second thought to the stability of the adult-worker ideology in German politics.

The political question that follows this assessment must ask: If not a liberal-feminist hegemony around the ideology of the adult-worker-model, then what else? Is there a counter-hegemonic ideology, a “double movement” (Polanyi, 2001) visible that can draw on the gender-egalitarian strength of the adult-worker-model, while preserving the strengths and working with the historically-given capacities of a neo-familialist model?

In the conclusion of section 4.3.4 I arrived at the insight that the unencumbered adult-worker-model is not sustainable, and that in consequence one ought to

consider the shortening of the working week to redistribute paid and unpaid working time between genders, rather than 'just' activate mothers into the labour market. It seems rather clear that the political alliance between liberal feminists and employers, which Seeleib-Kaiser & Toivonen (2011) identify as the agents behind recent German reforms, is unlikely to support a shorter working week. Employers are unlikely to support any change to the male life-course norm. Mid-level managers, who are responsible for the operational planning, have logical reasons as well to resist further pressures, such as parents' wishes for more time autonomy. At the same time, more and more businesses are affected by skills shortages, and willing to make concessions to their staff, especially professionals. The current labour market situation thus opens spaces for change, kairotic moments which professionals (individually, or organised) can use to push for more family-friendly working environments. Furthermore, many employers and superiors are fathers (more often than mothers) themselves. Hence, it would be unwise to assume that economic interests of the 'manager role' necessarily determine a person's political views and actions. Participants' recurring statements that superiors who were parents themselves 'understood' and were more open suggest that individual managers have some discretion, if not always the resources, to improve reconcilability.

A strategically important landmark for change must thus be the ideas managers and employers hold about the working time models of their employees, and efforts to reconsider how workplace culture and coordination could accommodate workers with fewer hours per capita. Employer interests towards simultaneous or sequential models of reconcilability (4.3.1), i.e. part- or full-time, have less to do with the total amount of labour available in each variant, but more with the amount of organisational adjustment that would arise from an adult-worker-model in which parents orient less to the rhythms of the workplace. Employers traditionally favour policies that give them control over employees' availability and flexibility, and oppose policies that broaden the legitimate circumstances under which workers can take leave or reduce hours. The more temporal autonomy a worker has, the higher the risks and costs of organising workloads, which makes the enterprise less

competitive. But in the current situation, employers also face risks and losses due to a lack of predictability and open communication about life plans.

What I suggest recurrently is that *excessive flexibility (or individualisation)* is a problem for enterprises, but also families and societies, when individual actions become so varied and unpredictable that environments cannot orient to that individual anymore, or that at least the costs of doing so increase exponentially. In other words, coordination problems multiply where people cannot form reliable expectations of one another. Asynchronicity between institutions furthermore generates more 'broken interfaces', i.e. less 'kairotic moments' in which enabling circumstances align. In effect, planning (strategic future-oriented action) becomes ever more complex and difficult, leading to alienation and problems of self-realisation that reduce the potential for happiness or a 'good life' (2.3.3). It appears that the rapid paces of restructuring often found in working life, and spilling into other areas of life, have a tendency to overwhelm human capacities to cope with information and to orient individual action in tune with collective processes.

Drawing on this position, a certain amount of scepticism appears appropriate when encountering demands for public childcare and parental availability to be further flexibilised, such as through an extension of Kita opening hours. From this sceptical position, flexibilisation is not a solution. What is needed, instead, would appear to be a new *synchronisation* of different spheres, that is, a better coordination of interfaces between human activities, but one that allows for *collective temporal structures* to act as an underlying grid for orientation. The standard working week once provided such a grid, in conjunction with the male-breadwinner-model. The downside of that grid was the economic dependence of women, a feature that is largely understood as unacceptable today. The key questions for further research should thus be:

- I. What kind of collective temporal grid does a society need that enables human well-being in a sustainable gender-egalitarian division of work within a 'post-modern' economy?
- II. What can a government/an enterprise/a parent practically do towards this, within the limits of their own influence?

Here I can only make a few guiding comments which direction such enquiries might take. With regard to the first question (I.), it is useful to ask how Germans imagine improvements. Inspiring here is their assessment of German culture in light of international experiences how work and family life can be reconciled. A good example are Elena's and Markus' perceptions of the Middle East and Scandinavia:

Elena: "even though it is worked there a lot and hard [...] there is not such a separation between profession and . and family life, so, and respectively it is perfectly okay if they call me and I say I am just picking up the children at the kindergarten, I will call back soon . no problem at all. With our German clients on the other hand . that does not come across well." (I25, 21:08-22:26)

Elena's Scandinavian colleagues benefitted from an "informal business code" that meetings took place in the morning until 14:00, and that afterwards everything could be done remotely (I25, 22:35-25:07). The German 'Präsenzkultur' in most workplaces is detrimental to the abilities of encumbered workers to participate. In an age of target-oriented pay and telework, this form of exerting control over workers is also technically unnecessary. As the Middle Eastern and Scandinavian comparison suggests, a relaxation of such norms would make it easier for workers to exert more temporal autonomy in their daily lives without the fear of offending their superiors or customers.

But attention to possible improvements should not be limited to the working world. Within families, understandings of gender equality are clearly very important, and traditional gendered divisions of work are loosening. Several of my participants discussed that they could imagine a role swap, so that he would take the domestic role for a while (I24, I28). But crucially, and this is indicative for the segment of parents that strictly opposes commodification *and* further defamilialisation, they did not see a point in becoming a parent if they did not have time for a child:

Thomas:	we see it as unrealistic that we both . you are in the rectory, and I work fulltime[
Imke:	[I find that . [
Thomas:	[then we don't need a child anymore.

(I24, 47:28-48:10)

That 'spatial' solutions to take children along to work are not very satisfying was indicated by Anna's experience:

Anna: "I find that exhausting – the conflict . I have always the feeling at . at work I have . one is also in a different energy, or the focus is elsewhere. And the switch I always found exhausting . so this . children-energy I'll say, and . then the switch into the working world . I struggled with this a lot in the beginning [...] until today I am not somebody who naturally takes her child along to work, only if I have to, one has no supervisor or so, then . okay. My environment at the radio, they react really friendly: of course, take him along, and great – so . I notice that I am simply more tense as otherwise [...] then I can't give 100% attention to both, and that is . then each only gets 50%, and that is dissatisfying for me, professionally, as for the child "(I23, 0:08-3:43)

This links back into the point I made earlier that spatial arrangements like telework cannot reconcile temporal demands on parents, or put differently, the need or ability to concentrate on a task. The sufficient level of concentration, and in the long-term also expected success, one can sensibly assume is constructed in comparison (and competition) to colleagues. To the extent those are 'unencumbered', a parent is likely to experience frustration. Anna's account exemplified that 'too much' simultaneity of roles may not be desirable or possible at all, and that to some extent, sequential solutions or third-party childcare make a lot more sense to create a harmonious balance between professional and private roles. Along similar lines, Ralf voiced a perspective not uncommon among family-oriented people who are sceptical about the family ministry's reconciliation discourse:

Ralf: "I could have imagined the role swap in a different way, so . that I would have cared more for the children, in that sense I don't think it's a question necessarily which sex one has . the first six months one as a man simply uh . G once tried to suck on my breast, that was not a good idea hehe . he got no milk, and it really hurt me hehe . so uh, the other question is, I think an image, that one can reconcile everything . uh, I don't think that works. Everything has a price somewhere, so uh .

sure, one can then like Frau von der Leyen⁷⁰, seven children and federal ministry and uh . once can easily deceive oneself, but I believe . I believe uh . that one somewhere, one only has limited resources, and those one has to allocate, if I say I want to spend much time with the children, then less time remains for work, and if I say . work is important, then less remains . the other topic goes down . uh, and . all that uh . somewhere . one always dies one death at that point.” (I28, 46:26-48:48)

With regard to the *longue durée* of the mother-child linkage, a certain amount of concessions to mammalian biology might be necessary to accept, even for the most ardent post-modern gender scholar. And in the phase around birth, these differences (sex) matter. This suggests that sequential solutions (baby breaks) are important in the short-term. But beyond that phase, reforms in the 2000s have shifted the wider timings around early child- and parenthood, notably by shortening leaves and expanding public childcare for younger years (ages 1-3). We can understand these changes, abstractly, as recommodification. As for shifts in gender relations: the two daddy months are simply too short to make much of an impact on male careers – that is why they cannot significantly affect the gender order, or the expectations that flow from it. A larger share of non-transferable leave for fathers might improve this condition. But for now the father-breadwinner linkage is as firmly held in place by work culture as the mother-child linkage by family culture. What the discourse around reconcilability instead affects are expectations for something more – but these are not really met by experiences. Instead various cultural expectations clash, because there is not enough ‘right time’ to live up to those expectations.

Time at home becomes ever more structured and curtailed by the time dedicated to work, resulting in bad consciences and an omnipresent awareness of ‘too little time’ (Hochschild, 2001). In a similar vein, the literature on inconspicuous consumption tells us that time scarcities for family result in garages full of unused camping equipment, because parents never found the time to take the children to their collectively anticipated family trip (e.g. Sullivan and Gershuny, 2004). 20 years after

⁷⁰ Family minister during the time of the reforms, strongly presented in the media as the face of those political endeavors.

Hochschild published her early work, my study suggests that this dynamic has affected Germany as well. But at the same time Germans appear to defend the family's time and space in society. Hochschild did not see that kind of political dynamic in the 1990s US, although her more recent work has thematised the growing importance of 'quality time' (Hochschild, 2012). Has Germany, the traditional conservative welfare state, responded differently to the same global dynamic of the knowledge economy and advanced capitalism? Are cultural appreciations and institutional frameworks different enough to 'make a difference' in where Germany is going with respect to the reshaping of home and work?

The analysis above has quite clearly shown how the life-course timings discussed by academia and the family ministry matter in the sense-making of parents about their life choices. But their narratives have also revealed a critical issue: the association of family with dependability – and relatedly the perceived need of economic stability as a precondition for parenthood. But as already discussed in the literature review, the 'old certainties' of Fordism, which still shape the childhood memories of today's young parents, are eroding. It seems worth contemplating that the imagined permanence of having children might serve as a way of coping with discontinuity, ephemerality, and risk in professional life. Furthermore, the construction of family appears quite gendered, simply because the (anticipated) consequences differ for men and women. This may explain why a survey amongst childless young people, commissioned by the magazine ELTERN, found that 70% of men, but only 61% of women wanted children (forsa, 2011). It seems that at the end of the day, especially "we" young female professionals often think that *never* is the right time for a child. Put differently, the ways in which family is anticipated or imagined can be insufficient in generating a sense of security and recognition, in particular for young women, to *encourage* (quite literally) parenthood. Family as an idea seems caught in an emotional ambivalence between love and security in dependable personal relations, fear of becoming dependent, and fear of failure to be dependable in a fast-moving world.

In the bigger picture, the question comes to the fore to what extent a family-oriented value system might pose a powerful alternative to the capitalist value

system oriented to material prosperity. Can family – understood as committed, loving relations of mutual support – serve as an end of all human activity that provides a more compelling target than prosperity can under the given zeitgeist shaped by economic crisis, international tensions, and global warming? Can conservative family models as part of a resurgence of right political ideologies be explained to some extent in terms of family making a revival as “society’s last bastion” (Frevert, 1989, p. 265; Schelsky, 1975)? And should left feminists be concerned that an association of feminism with liberalism in the German public (dominance of adult-worker-model) might lead to a counter hegemony that turns not only against liberalism, but also against feminism?

These questions are beyond the scope of this dissertation. Implications for future research in the literatures addressed above are that micro-level studies of temporal experience can complement existing findings through a variety of contributions. Feminist political economy accounts were enriched by a discussion of a crisis of care in terms of alienation, focussed on temporal disempowerment and asynchronous social norms and institutions. Relevantly to feminist economics of care, care was discussed in terms of affective relations and attachment, and the organisational need for ‘time together’. Perhaps most centrally, the feminist welfare state literature around the adult-worker-model was situated in the German case, pointing to a co-optation by government and employers (Nowak, 2010, passive revolution). Here I made the distinction between ‘ideal’ and ‘unencumbered’ adult-worker-models, and how reconcilability problems in the everyday undermined the hegemonic potential of liberal-feminist ideology.

Adding to theoretical perspectives on the politics of time, I have pointed out that the coordination of a total division of labour, including both production and social reproduction, becomes exponentially more difficult with growing individualisation of schedules. Therefore I posited that not further flexibilisation, but the renewal of a collective temporal grid for society is necessary to enable people in all areas of life to work and live *together*. Temporal autonomy needs to be more than disposable time: it requires a temporal social structure which enables the participation in collective activities. Excessive individualisation of schedules is a problem for

effective social co-existence, because it makes mutual predictability more difficult. The result, on a practical and emotional level, is uncertainty and a greater necessity for time management, which at some point becomes inefficient and stressful. Improvements to the above set of problems requires time politics to bring biological and social age into harmony; organise work and care in such a way that more diverse life-courses can be supported, minimising downward social mobility; rebalance flexibility and time control so that personal commitments are made easier to realise; and collectivise the costs of social reproduction.

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8 Appendices

8.1 Participant / Interview List

Pseudonym / Name*	File No./Interview	Position
<i>Lena</i>	<i>13, 14</i>	<i>Job Centre Employee</i>
Imke and Thomas	24	Parent(s)
Markus and Elena	25	Parent(s)
Christina and Ralf	28	Parent(s)
Elif	42	Parent(s)
<i>Vera</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>Parent(s)</i>
Michelle	44	Parent(s)
Lamia	45	Parent(s)
Amira	45	Parent(s)
<i>Sarah</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>Parent(s)</i>
<i>Alia</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>Parent(s)</i>
<i>Zehra</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>Parent(s)</i>
<i>Aisha</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>Parent(s)</i>
Anna	22, 23	Parent(s)
Inga	29, 30	Parent(s)
<i>Heike</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Family Education (Familienberatung)</i>
<i>Alice</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>Family Education (Familienberatung)</i>
Rebecca	52	Human Resource Manager
Sibille	48, 49	Human Resource Manager
Johanna	17	Public Childcare (Kita)
Alexa	18	Public Childcare (Kita)
<i>Leyla</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>Public Childcare (Kita)</i>
Julian	33	Public Childcare (Kita)
Barbara	15, 16	Public Childcare (Kita)
Silke	19, 20	Public Childcare (Kita)
Britta	19, 20	Public Childcare (Kita)
Inge Losch-Engler	50	NGO – Landesverband Kindertagespflege NRW
Mara	51	NGO – Landesverband Kindertagespflege NRW
Hans-Georg Nelles	55	Blogger and Consultant: Väter-und-Karriere.de
Eva-Maria Helm	37, 38	NGO – Frauen gegen Erwerbslosigkeit e.V.
Gisela Neumann	37, 38	NGO – Frauen gegen Erwerbslosigkeit e.V.
Katrin Biane	40, 41	NGO – Bürgerzentrum Vingst
Beate Mages	40, 41	NGO – Bürgerzentrum Vingst

Isabel Gronack-Walz	53, 54	NGO – Verband kindereicher Familien Deutschland e.V.
Attila Gümüs	34, 35, 36	Politics – Landeselternbeirat NRW
Ulrike Volland-Dörmann	34	Managing Director of Childcare Provider (AWO Kreisverband Köln)
<i>Katrin Wasser</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>District Youth Welfare Agency (Jugendamt Köln)</i>
<i>Kurt Steinheuer</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>District Youth Welfare Agency (Jugendamt Köln)</i>
Karsten Betz	1, notes	District Youth Welfare Agency (Jugendamt Köln)
Karsten Fokuhl	2, notes	District Youth Welfare Agency (Jugendamt Köln)

* full names indicate named interview participants, first names only are pseudonyms for anonymised interviews

Italics: source not explicitly used or cited in this dissertation

8.2 Interview Guide Kita Managers (German)

1. Wie verbringen Sie ihre Zeit in Beruf?
 - a. Was sind wiederkehrende Tätigkeiten, welche Zeitbedarfe haben sie?
 - b. Was passiert außer der Reihe?
 - c. Wie entsteht Zeitknappheit?
 - d. Wieviel Zeit bleibt für Privatleben?
2. Haben sich diese Arbeitsrhythmen in den letzten 10+ Jahren verändert?
 - a. Hat sich Ihre Rolle verändert?
 - b. Passen Ihre persönlichen Leitbilder mit den beruflichen Anforderungen noch zusammen?
3. Wie sind die politischen Reformen zum Kitausbau bei Ihnen angekommen?
 - a. Was mussten Sie verändern?
 - b. Wie wurden Sie informiert?
4. Wer sind Ihre Vorgesetzten, wie arbeiten Sie zusammen?
 - a. Welche Informationen fließen zwischen Ihnen und in welcher Form?
(Dokumente)
 - b. Welche gemeinsamen Interessen oder Konflikte gibt es zwischen Ihnen?
5. Wie arbeiten Sie mit den Eltern zusammen?
 - a. Welche Informationen fließen zwischen Ihnen und in welcher Form?
(Dokumente)
 - b. Wie werden Kitaplätze vergeben? (Prozess)
 - c. Welche gemeinsamen Interessen oder Konflikte gibt es zwischen Ihnen?
6. Was denken Sie über den Kitastreick?
7. Wo erleben Sie in Ihrem Umfeld Geschlechterunterschiede?

8.3 Interview Guide Parents (German)

1. Was ist „Familie“?

2. Lebenslaufperspektive

a. Beruflicher Werdegang (Lebenslauf durchgehen)

- i. Wie viele Stunden haben Sie in Berufsphase X gearbeitet?
- ii. Wie flexibel waren Ihre Arbeitszeiten in Phase X?
- iii. **Wann haben Sie wichtige Entscheidungen zur beruflichen Veränderung getroffen?**
- iv. **Warum haben Sie sich beruflich verändert?**
- v. **Haben private Ziele für diese Veränderungen eine entscheidende Rolle gespielt?**

b. Privater Werdegang/Familienplanung

- i. Wollten Sie schon immer Familie?
- ii. **Wie viele Kinder waren oder sind ihr Ideal?**
- iii. **Wann entstand der erste ernste Kinderwunsch?**
- iv. Wie hat ihr Partner reagiert?
- v. Wie hat ihr privates Umfeld reagiert?
- vi. **Wann kam das erste Kind? (ggf. Warum verzögert?)**
- vii. **Was war für sie ausschlaggebend, in dem Moment sich für ein Kind zu entscheiden?**
- viii. **Gab es damals zwischen Familienplanung und beruflichen Zielen Konflikte?**
- ix. **Wie haben sie diese gelöst?**
 - x. Wie hat ihr Arbeitgeber auf ihre Familienplanung reagiert?
- xi. **Welche Unterstützungsmöglichkeiten gab es damals für sie, seitens ihrer Familie, Arbeitgeber oder der Öffentlichkeit?**
- xii. Welche davon haben Sie in Anspruch genommen, welche waren wichtig?
- xiii. Wo haben sie gelernt, was Erziehung und Mutter/Vater sein bedeutet? Wo haben sie während der Schwangerschaft und nach der Geburt Informationen erhalten?
- xiv. **Welche Personen haben regelmäßig als Ratgeber in Sachen Elternschaft agiert?**

	Person 1	Person 2
Bezahlter Arbeit		
Hausarbeit		
Erziehungsarbeit		
Transport (Wege, Pendeln)		
Ehrenamtlichen o.Ä. Engagement		
Freizeit		

3. Kurzzeit-Perspektive
 - a. **Wie viele Stunden verbringen Sie heute mit: (Liste oben)**
 - b. **Gibt es bei Ihnen eine feste Arbeitsteilung?**
 - c. Wie sieht die aus?
 - d. Entscheiden sie das selbst, oder sind sie in dieser Verteilung von Dritten abhängig?
 - e. **Würden sie ihre Aufgaben lieber anders aufteilen? Wie sähe das Ideal aus?**
 - f. **Welche Prioritäten haben sie in der Zeitverteilung? Was geht im Alltag vor?**
 - g. Haben sie „zu wenig“ Zeit?
 - h. Wofür würden sie zusätzliche Zeit nutzen?
 - i. Womit würden sie gerne weniger Zeit verbringen?
 - j. **Ist Geld dabei ein Problem?**
 - k. **Fehlen ihnen Angebote/Services, um Arbeit abzugeben?** (z.B. Randzeitenbetreuung)
4. Kinderbetreuung
 - a. Wie viele Stunden betreuen sie ihre Kinder selbst?
 - b. **Wie viele Stunden macht das jemand anders? Wer wie lange?**
 - c. **Was kostet das? Ist das für sie viel Geld?**
 - d. Wer steht Ihnen in Notfällen zur Seite, z.B. wenn die Kinder krank sind?
 - e. **Machen sie sich Sorgen um die Zukunft ihrer Kinder? Wie begegnen sie diesen?**
 - f. In welche Formen der Kindererziehung und Förderung investieren sie gerne? Welche Aspekte von Förderung sind Ihnen besonders wichtig?
 - g. **Wie gestalten sie die Freizeit ihrer Kinder?**
 - i. Hobbies, Kurse etc.
 - ii. Zeit mit den Eltern, allein, zusammen?
5. Einschätzungen/Wissen
 - a. Kennen sie diese Angebote? (Liste)
 - b. Nutzen sie diese Angebote? (Liste)
 - c. Beschäftigen sie sich mit Familienpolitik?
 - d. Woher haben sie ihre Informationen?
 - e. Aktiv: wie?
 - f. Beschäftigen sie sich mit Geschlechterfragen und Gleichstellungspolitik?
 - g. Woher haben sie ihre Informationen?
 - h. Aktiv: wie?
6. **Gibt es noch etwas, das für sie wichtig ist, über das wir noch nicht gesprochen haben**

Betreuungsmöglichkeiten	überlegt	genutzt (in Std/Wo)	Wo/wer? (Name)	Warum?	Kommentar
Kindertagesstätte					
Private Elterninitiative					
Kindertagespflege					
Ein nicht berufstätiger Elternteil					
Beide Eltern nicht berufstätig					
Ein Elternteil in Teilzeit					
Beide Eltern in Teilzeit (nacheinander)					
Beide Eltern in Teilzeit (gleichzeitig)					
andere Familienmitglieder (z.B. Großeltern), Freunde					
Au-pair, Kinderfrau, o.Ä.					
Babysitter					
...					
Andere Angebote	überlegt	genutzt	Wo/wer? (Name)	Warum?	Kommentar
Familienbildung/Kurse (feste Termine)					
Familiencafé o.Ä. (flexibel)					
Familienberatung					
...					
Über Kinder reden mit:	überlegt	genutzt	Wo/wer? (Name)	Warum?	Kommentar
Familie und Freunde					
Erzieher/-innen der Kinder					
Andere Experten? (Therapeuten, Sozialarbeiter,...)					
...					